

# THE STRAITS TIMES

World ‘Bikini climber’ found dead after fall A12



Top of the News The undergrad who took on Mahathir A3



Sport New Greek hero in tennis C10



Sport Harlem Globetrotters back to thrill fans C9



Home S’pore acquires rare copy of Sejarah Melayu B1 • Life How to keep a smart eye on your home D2

## S’pore still faces strong threat from terrorism: MHA

Vigilance remains high amid menace of ISIS, uncovering of more radicalised people here

Hariz Baharudin

The terrorism threat to Singapore remains high as more radicalised individuals here are uncovered and terror groups continue to make their presence felt globally, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said in a new assessment report.

While acknowledging that there has been no specific intelligence on an attack being planned against Singapore since 2017, it said security agencies have continued to maintain high vigilance.

“Among others, we continue to detect Singaporeans and foreigners working in Singapore becoming radicalised by terrorist propaganda. The public must continue to stay alert and be prepared that an attack might one day succeed,” MHA said in the second edition of its Singapore Terrorism Threat Assessment Report released yesterday.

But a survey conducted in June and July last year by MHA of some 2,000 respondents found that only one in five feels the terrorism threat is imminent, or that an attack could occur within the next five years.

Alluding to this, MHA said that “it is important for Singaporeans to not become complacent”.

The Singapore Terrorism Threat Assessment Report, first published in 2017, is aimed at alerting Singaporeans to the security environment here and regionally.

The first report said the threat to Singapore “remained highest in recent years”, pointing out that it had been specifically targeted in the preceding year and that the regional threat had heightened.

It had also cited the worsening threat in the region arising from the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terror group and its affiliates.

This year, MHA said the most pressing threat facing Singapore continues to emanate from ISIS, whose online presence has drawn it support despite heavy territorial losses in the Middle East.

The ministry also warned that other terror groups such as Jamaah Islamiah and Al-Qaeda are regrouping and may again launch large-scale attacks.

Self-radicalised individuals are

also an area of concern, with eight dealt with under the Internal Security Act (ISA) in the past two years, bringing the total number since 2015 to 22. In contrast, between 2007 and 2014, just 11 radicalised Singaporeans were held under ISA.

Radicalisation among foreign workers here also continues to persist. MHA revealed that five more Indonesian domestic workers have been repatriated after they were found to be radicalised, bringing the total to 14 since 2015.

While there is no credible intelligence on an attack being planned here, the security agencies remain on high alert, said MHA.

“Our security agencies will do whatever it takes to keep our country and people safe from terrorist elements,” it added.

“We will not hesitate to take action against any individual propagating pro-violence or segregationist religious teachings, whatever the religion.”

The public has a role to play in the fight against terrorism, said the ministry, as it highlighted the important role SGSecure – the national terrorism awareness movement – plays.

It added that through SGSecure, most Singaporeans are now more vigilant to suspicious objects and behaviours, and know what to do when they spot potential threats.

The ministry also underscored the importance of early reporting of potential cases of self-radicalised individuals, as it would allow officers to act before the individual harms or kills someone.

“In addition, reporting to the authorities can save these individuals from themselves,” said MHA.

“Once they commit an act of violence, they will face much more severe penalties and may even be liable for capital punishment for serious offences.”

MHA had revealed last Wednesday that a former religious teacher and his student were issued Restriction Orders under the ISA last year for radical views promoting violence.

## Dyson moving its head office to Singapore

British home appliance manufacturer Dyson will be moving its corporate head office to Singapore, with a majority of its future investments being in Asia.

This means the company will become a Singapore-based business and primarily be regulated by the law here.

Dyson already employs 1,100 people here, where it plans to double the size of its research and operations. Its Singapore Technology Centre at Science Park One will also double in size.

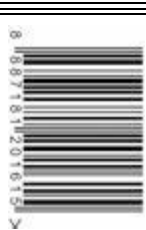
Dyson CEO Jim Rowan, who is also based in Singapore, said yesterday that the decision was not related to Brexit or tax benefits.

With the move, Dyson will be a “global technology company”, he added. The decision comes just months after the company announced that it will set up its first electric car plant in Singapore by next year.

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SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6

## Heng discusses US-China trade issues at Davos forum



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The momentum of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) will not slow if countries support the vision of economic integration through building connectivity, said Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat.

“Geopolitics will have an impact on the pace and the international trading system, so it is important for us to push on and look for projects that are economically viable, bankable and have proper rules and regulations,” he said at the World Economic Forum meetings of political and business leaders in Davos, Switzerland, yesterday.

“And we shouldn’t let the current trade skirmishes end up affecting the longer-term objective of better integration for a better world,” he added, referring to the trade war between the United States and China.

It is vital, Mr Heng said in an earlier interview, that the two countries settle their trade differences to avoid damaging economic growth elsewhere in the world. “It is important for both sides to try and cut a deal because the impact on the global economy of any trade friction is going to be very negative,” he told Bloomberg Television.

Trade tensions are prompting changes in how goods are manufactured and traded, he said, adding that South-east Asia is a potential beneficiary as companies seek to shift supply chains.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A4

## SUV, driver’s body retrieved in Penang Bridge crash



Malaysian rescuers yesterday retrieved the car that plunged into the sea on Sunday from the Penang Bridge, with the driver’s body inside. The wrecked sport utility vehicle was hoisted out by a crane in a 20-minute operation. It had plunged into the sea after colliding with another car on the bridge linking Penang island with the mainland part of the state.

PHOTO: THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

SEE WORLD A15



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# 10 must-reads for today

## 1 Striker on missing plane

English Premier League club Cardiff City's record new signing, Argentina striker Emiliano Sala, was on board a light aircraft feared missing off the Channel Islands on Monday night, the French civil aviation authorities confirmed yesterday. Sala was flying to Cardiff aboard a small plane that disappeared from radars around 20km north of Guernsey. Search and rescue efforts are ongoing. **SPORT C12**



English Premier League club Cardiff City signed Argentina striker Emiliano Sala in a record deal on Saturday. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

## 2 Terrorism threat high: MHA

Security agencies have continued to maintain vigilance as the terrorism threat to Singapore remains high, the Ministry of Home Affairs said in its Singapore Terrorism Threat Assessment Report. It said the public must continue to stay alert and be prepared that a terrorist attack might one day succeed. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

## 3 Boost for building sector

To help the building industry move from labour-intensive methods to more "smart" ones, a \$72 million training fund has been set up towards boosting skills in the sector. This includes financing existing scholarship and sponsorship programmes for students and adults through the funds, which have been earmarked from last June to next May. **TOP OF THE NEWS A5**

## 4 Malaysia picks a new king

Intrigue, behind-the-scenes lobbying and a tinge of uncertainty are in the air as Malaysia's nine royal families meet tomorrow to pick a new king. The outcome carries implications for Malaysia's politics and bilateral relations with Singapore. **WORLD A10**

## 5 Rohingya nabbed in India

Indian police have arrested 31 Rohingya Muslims stranded on the border after they were denied entry into Bangladesh and border officials failed to agree on what to do with members of the community fleeing a crackdown in India. **WORLD A16**

## 6 A wish-list for Davos

As the World Economic Forum kicks off in Davos, associate editor Vikram Khanna (below) highlights some issues that should matter: China's slowing growth and its impact on the world, and how to avert Brexit or deal with its fallout. **OPINION A19**



## 7 Healing magnetic device

A National University of Singapore research team has developed MRegen, a device which uses magnetic fields to stimulate the muscles in a person's leg and promote recovery. The magnetic signature can be adjusted to target other kinds of tissue or organs. **HOME B2**

## 8 WhatsApp forwarding curbs

Limiting how many times WhatsApp messages may be forwarded would slow the spread of fake news, but malicious senders could find ways to get around this. Observers were reacting to the move by the messaging app to reduce the total number of individuals or groups that users could forward a message to from 20 to five. **HOME B4**

## 9 Finance sector's green role

The finance sector plays an important role in directing capital flows towards economic activities with environmental benefits, as tackling climate change requires the commitment of various sectors, says Mr Masagos Zulkifli. **BUSINESS C1**

## 10 Rare bond in vampire series

Based on a best-selling trilogy, television series The Passage is about an outbreak from a botched experiment which turns some death-row inmates into highly infectious vampires. At the heart of the story is the friendship between 10-year-old Amy Bellafonte (Saniyya Sidney) and Brad Wolgast (Mark-Paul Gosselaar), the government agent sent to hunt her down. **LIFE D6**



PHOTO: FOX

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### VIDEO

#### World's 'rubbish bin'

Malaysia has taken China's spot as the top importer of plastic scrap, bringing in more than 700,000 tonnes of plastic waste since January last year and becoming the world's 'rubbish bin', says Greenpeace. <http://str.sg/trashcan>



### WEB SPECIAL

#### Who is Gigi Wu?

"Bikini climber" Gigi Wu, 36, was found dead, possibly from hypothermia, after falling down a ravine in Taiwan's Yushan national park. Here are five things about her. <http://str.sg/gigiwu>

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# Oxford student sparks debate after exchange with Mahathir

Singaporean who engaged Malaysian PM over S'pore-KL rows cites tradition of speakers being challenged robustly

**Arlina Arshad**  
Regional Correspondent

Mr Darrion Mohan, a Singaporean student at the University of Oxford, finds himself thrust into the lime-light after engaging Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in a debate on Singapore-Malaysia disputes, with some Internet users praising him and others saying he was too confrontational.

The 22-year-old pointed out, however, that the Oxford Union – where the forum was held – was “fundamentally a debating society”.

“When leaders speak at the union, there has always been a strong tradition of them being confronted with tough questions and challenged robustly,” he told The Straits Times in an e-mail interview.

A video he posted on Facebook of the six-minute robust exchange with Tun Dr Mahathir last Friday at the Oxford Union, Britain’s prestigious debating society, has garnered more than 7,500 likes, about 5,700 shares and 1,400 comments. The comments were mostly supportive, although there were some critics.

“Superb young man. You have stood up loud and clear for your country,” Facebook user Elizabeth Nair said.

Another user, Ruth Tay, said: “I

do not know you personally but I think you were outstanding! You have expressed the views of the majority of Singaporeans.”

But user Peter Koh said: “Why you so *kaypoh* (Hokkien for busy-body)? Leave it to the governments to settle *lah*.”

Another user, Terence Charles Darby, said: “When a dispute arises between neighbours, often raising voices at each other can only worsen the situation. Very often, a winning argument need not be had through an aggressive attitude.”

Mr Mohan, a second-year history and politics undergraduate, had referred to the Johor Menteri Besar’s recent intrusion into Singapore waters, and said Singapore and Malaysia were “again embroiled in an unnecessary and potentially inter-cine maritime dispute”.

During the public forum, Mr Mohan had asked the 93-year-old Malaysian Premier if he agreed that Datuk Osman Sapian’s intrusion into the waters off Tuas on Jan 9, which led to the postponement of an annual bilateral meeting, might add to the perception that the Malaysian government is “pugnacious”, “acts in bad faith”, and “wants to return to the days of confrontational diplomacy and barbed rhetoric”.

He asked Dr Mahathir, who had earlier addressed the society, if



At the Oxford Union forum last Friday, Mr Darrion Mohan had referred to the Johor Menteri Besar’s recent intrusion into Singapore waters, and said that Singapore and Malaysia were “again embroiled in an unnecessary and potentially inter-cine maritime dispute”. PHOTO: COURTESY OF DARRION MOHAN

RARE BACK-AND-FORTH EXCHANGE

**The norm is to ask a single question, with perhaps one or two follow-up questions. A back-and-forth exchange like the one I had with Dr M is rare.**



**MR DARRION MOHAN**, a history and politics undergraduate at the University of Oxford.

any action would be taken against Mr Osman. He also listed the Singapore-Kuala Lumpur High-Speed Rail project, the airspace dispute over Seletar Airport, the proposed “crooked” bridge between Johor Baru and Singapore, calls to revise

water supply prices and the maritime dispute as indicators that Dr Mahathir wanted a return to the “fraught relations with Singapore” seen during his first stint as premier between 1981 and 2003.

Mr Mohan said he regularly attends talks by speakers at the Oxford Union and often takes part in the question-and-answer sessions, and had been looking forward to Dr Mahathir’s talk. “As the maritime dispute is a current and controversial issue, I thought that it would be interesting to get Dr M’s views.”

Founded in 1823, the Oxford Union is one of Britain’s oldest student unions. It is known for its high-profile speaker events, at which members are free to challenge the views of the speakers.

It has hosted world leaders from diverse backgrounds, from politicians and musicians to sporting legends and literary greats. Past speakers included former United States presidents Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan,

the late pop star Michael Jackson, and Argentinian football great Diego Maradona.

Mr Mohan felt that the most noteworthy point of his exchange was when Dr Mahathir repeatedly referred to the waters off Tuas as “neutral waters” and “international waters”, contradicting earlier claims they were Malaysian waters.

Dr Mahathir had remarked that Singapore’s reaction to Mr Osman’s visit was quite severe, “as if you are going to war”. He had then added: “It is not Singapore water either, it is international water and the Menteri Besar can go into international water without Singapore sending warships to chase him away.”

To this, Mr Mohan said: “Dr M’s concession that these are, in fact, international waters undermines Malaysia’s initial claim and suggests that Malaysia has no basis for extending Johor’s port limits.”

He had hoped that the elder statesman would answer his initial question about the bilateral disputes instead of focusing on the 1962 Water Agreement.

“Taking into account his record and positions, Dr M could offer a unique perspective, and I was interested to hear his views,” he said.

The elder of two brothers, the avid cross-country runner studied at Raffles Institution and enrolled at the University of Oxford in 2017. He declined to give more details about his family.

He said he is not receiving a scholarship from the Singapore Government or the private sector, but was “lucky enough” to have been awarded a partial academic scholarship from Oxford after doing well in his first-year examinations.

According to his LinkedIn account, he was an intern at Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs between January and March in 2017, and at management consulting firm McKinsey & Company between September and October the same year.

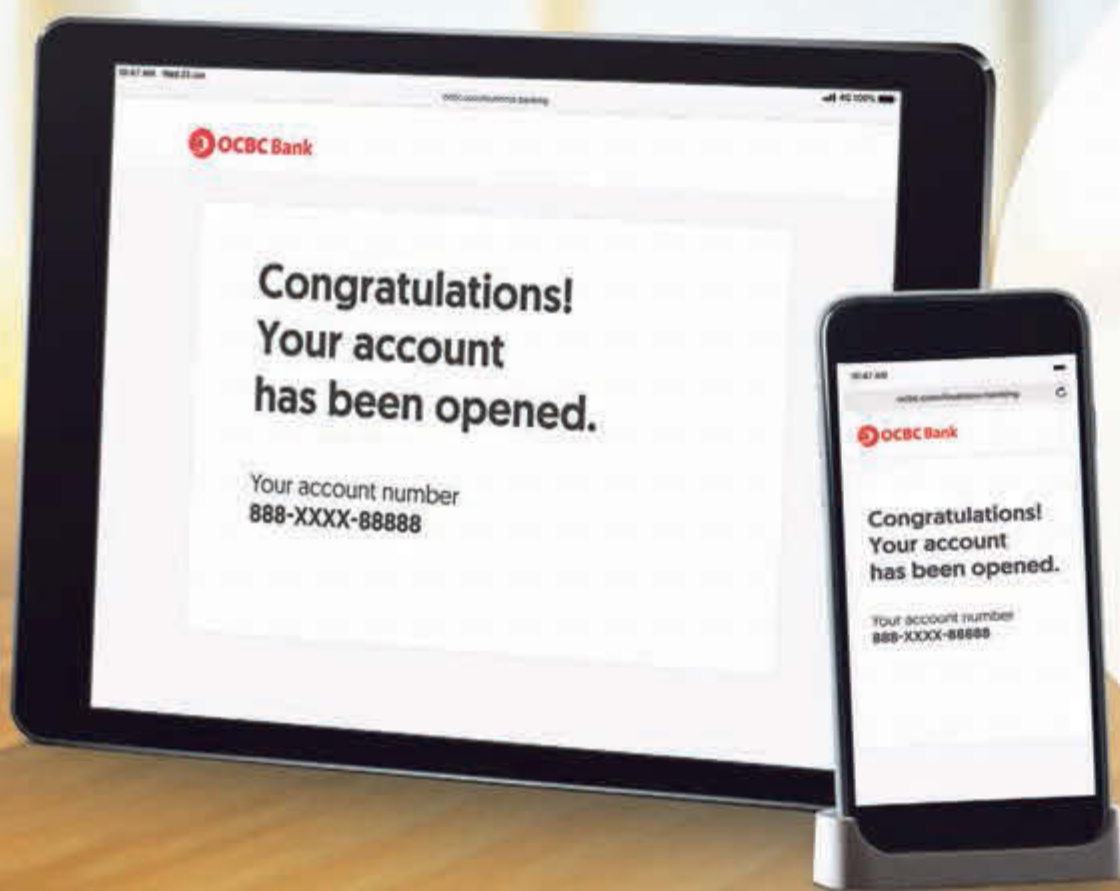
He said that he decided not to hog the microphone after seeing a number of raised hands in the audience. He felt that it would not be fair to prevent others from engaging Dr Mahathir.

He said: “The norm is to ask a single question, with perhaps one or two follow-up questions. A back-and-forth exchange like the one I had with Dr M is rare.”

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## Very negative global impact if no US-China trade deal, says Heng

DAVOS • It is vital the US and China settle their trade differences to avoid damaging growth elsewhere in the world, Singapore's Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said.

"It is important for both sides to try and cut a deal because the impact on the global economy of any trade friction is going to be very negative," Mr Heng said in an interview with Bloomberg Television on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum meetings in Davos.

The world's top policymakers and executives gather this week in Davos with the global economy at a turning point: The upending of trade frameworks and a cyclical slowdown in demand have prompted widespread downgrades of global growth. Another came on Monday from the International Monetary Fund, though it left growth forecasts for the United States and China untouched.

Singapore is one of the most export-reliant countries in the world, and US-China trade tensions and a slowing global economy are particularly worrying for the authorities in the city state.

Economic growth held above 3 per cent for a second year in 2018, and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong expects an expansion of 1.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent in 2019, with "major uncertainties" in the global economy and nervous financial markets weighing on the outlook.

US and China trade negotiators resumed talks this month to try to resolve their dispute, with the two sides making little progress so far on issues of intellectual property, according to people close to the discussions.

Mr Heng said trade tensions are prompting changes in how goods are manufactured and traded.

"In the short run, many companies are really scrambling to look at how they can restructure the supply chain to make it a little more resilient," he said.

South-east Asia is a potential beneficiary as companies seek to shift supply chains, the minister said, echoing recent comments from economists and businesses who see countries such as Vietnam and Malaysia as potential winners from the trade war.



Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said in an interview with Bloomberg Television that trade tensions are prompting changes in how goods are manufactured and traded. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

"A number of the South-east Asian countries, I think, will have the benefit of this restructuring," Mr Heng said. Logistics companies are already reporting shifts as a result of the trade conflict and chang-

ing global dynamics, he said.

"At the same time, the Chinese companies are also going out of China – China has a very explicit strategy of encouraging the companies to go out," he said. "So, as they

go out, the entire supply chain is going to be reconfigured."

Mr Heng warned that trade stress is likely to persist.

"There will continue to be many sources of friction," he said. "This is

going to be a fairly medium- to long-term issue. There will be sources of disagreement on how things have to be done and how competition is to be conducted." BLOOMBERG

# WEF panel upbeat on benefits of China's Belt and Road Initiative

Project, while involving geopolitics, will create economic opportunities for nations

Tan Dawn Wei

Geopolitics cannot be divorced from China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), but the mega project will create plenty of economic opportunities and growth for countries, said panellists at a World Economic Forum discussion in Davos yesterday.

And while current tensions between the world's two biggest economies, China and the United States, have rattled the rest of the globe, long-term infrastructural projects that are vital to connecting nations and driving free trade will

continue at a rapid clip, they predicted.

Launched five years ago, Chinese President Xi Jinping's signature development strategy to revive ancient sea and land trade routes linking Africa, Europe and Asia has won the support of an increasing number of countries eager for China's help.

It involves an estimated US\$1.5 trillion (S\$2.04 trillion) of Chinese investment across Asia alone in the next decade for infrastructure projects such as ports, industrial hubs, railways and roads.

While experts have also expressed worry over these developing countries' ability to repay the

large debts they owe to China, not to mention fears over the East Asian giant's expanding geopolitical influence, the four panellists were upbeat on the benefits of the BRI.

"Any kind of transportation project which connects countries will have a geopolitical background and positively influence geopolitical situations, stability and credibility because it creates interdependence," said Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev.

Singapore's Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said the momentum of the initiative will not slow if countries support the vision of economic integration through building connectivity. "Geopolitics will have an impact on the pace and the international trading system, so it is important for us to push on and look for projects that are economically

PUSH FOR VIABLE PROJECTS

Geopolitics will have an impact on the pace and the international trading system, so it is important for us to push on and look for projects that are economically viable, bankable and have proper rules and regulations... so you can show to the world that these are projects that have long-term benefits.

”

FINANCE MINISTER HENG SWEKEAT

viable, bankable and have proper rules and regulations... so you can show to the world that these are projects that have long-term benefits," he said.

"And we shouldn't let the current trade skirmishes end up affecting the longer-term objective of better integration for a better world."

The BRI is a focal point in China's relationship with Singapore, which has been an early supporter of the mega project. The two countries have identified four major areas of cooperation: infrastructure connectivity, financial connectivity, joint collaboration to help other countries, and services to help resolve cross-border commercial disputes.

Mr Heng said while it is easy to say that free trade will benefit all, in practice there will be winners and losers, and countries will have to restruct-

ture to keep up. "The underlying concept is we can all have a better life if we cooperate, but reaching there is not a given," he said, noting of the BRI: "It's a serious vision which needs to be pursued vigorously."

Mr Xu Niansha, chairman of state-owned Poly Group, which is primarily in the business of defence manufacturing sales, said China has come a long way in the past 40 years, and developing nations linked by BRI share similarities with China's developmental path. "Therefore, it will be much easier to collaborate because of the similarities," he said.

Mr Xiao Yaqing, chairman of China's state-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission, offered an assurance to firms eager to come on board, but facing pressures of trying to strike a balance between a long-term development vision and short-term rewards. "If you don't think you can strike that balance just yet, you can wait before participating in Belt and Road," he said from among the audience, when asked for his view on the subject by the panel's moderator.

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READ MORE

Vikram Khanna: A wish-list for Davos  
OPINION A19



Musicians playing alphorns at the opening ceremony of the World Economic Forum in Davos yesterday. A PwC survey of nearly 1,400 CEOs found that 29 per cent believe global economic growth will decline over the next 12 months. PHOTO: REUTERS



## Trade worries sour CEOs' mood as leaders converge

DAVOS • Chief executive officers around the world have grown a lot more pessimistic about the global economic outlook because of trade disputes and tense relations between major powers, a survey showed on the eve of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

The PwC survey of nearly 1,400 CEOs found that 29 per cent believe that global economic growth will decline over the next 12 months – six times the level last year and the highest percentage since 2012.

The most pronounced shift was among business leaders in the United States, where optimism dropped to 37 per cent from 63 per cent a year ago, against the backdrop of an economic slowdown and a trade war with China.

But the share of CEOs who believe the growth rate will fall increased significantly across every

region, and this translated into a drop in business leaders' expectations that their companies will be able to grow revenues both in the short term and the medium term.

"It is quite a reversal from last year, and the gloomier mood cuts across just about everywhere in the world," said Mr Bob Moritz, global chairman at audit and accounting multinational PwC.

"With the rise of trade tension and protectionism, it stands to reason that confidence is waning."

The International Monetary Fund on Monday cut its world economic growth forecasts for this year and next because of weakness in Europe and some emerging markets, and said that failure to resolve trade rows could further destabilise a slowing global economy.

In its second downgrade in three months, the global lender also cited

a bigger-than-expected slowdown in China's economy and a possible no-deal Brexit as risks to its outlook, saying these could worsen market turbulence in financial markets.

The US government shutdown – which is keeping President Donald Trump away from the gathering of the global political and business elite in Davos, which runs from yesterday to Friday – is also contributing to the sense of malaise and is expected to hit the US economy.

The impact of the trade dispute between China and the US, the world's two largest economies, ranked among the top concerns for business leaders in several regions.

Mr Trump has vowed to increase tariffs on US\$200 billion (S\$272 billion) worth of Chinese imports on March 2 if China fails to address intellectual property theft, forced technology transfers and non-tariff barriers.

As a result, Chinese CEOs have diversified their markets for growth, with only 17 per cent selecting the US, down from 59 per cent last year.

"Australia seems to be the principal beneficiary, not even in China's top 10 last year, it has risen to the No. 1 destination for Chinese invest-

ment," the report said.

Still, in China, 62 per cent of business leaders are adjusting their supply chain and sourcing strategy, pivoting away from the US, because of concerns about the future of trade relations between the two countries.

Another strategic shift highlighted by the report is businesses' tendency to hunker down and turn inward instead of looking for expansion abroad or through acquisitions.

When asked what they would focus on to drive revenue growth over the next 12 months, 77 per cent of the CEOs said "operational efficiencies" and 71 per cent said "organic growth".

Highlighting the growing uncertainty, 15 per cent of them could not identify a single country for growth opportunities away from their home base, PwC said.

As the clock ticks towards the March 29 deadline for Britain's exit from the European Union, only 8 per cent of respondents picked Britain as one of their most important foreign markets for growth prospects in the next 12 months, down from 15 per cent a year ago.

REUTERS

VOICES FROM WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

What do you like when you are a cross-country skier? Good visibility, no uncertainty. You like it when it is kind of stable and eventually when it is a little bit downhill – risks down, no hazards along the way. The third thing you like is everybody skiing in the tracks.

”

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND MANAGING DIRECTOR

CHRISTINE LAGARDE, at a press conference on Monday, the first day of the WEF, comparing the global economy's current situation to the travails of a cross-country skier.

I was born during the Holocene – the 12,000 (year) period of climatic stability that allowed humans to settle, farm and create civilisations. In the space of my lifetime, all that has changed. The Holocene has ended. The Garden of Eden is no more. We have changed the world so much that scientists say we are in a new geological age: the Anthropocene, the age of humans. We need to move beyond guilt or blame and get on with the practical tasks at hand.

”

SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH, naturalist and broadcaster, speaking at the start of the WEF. He urged political and business leaders to tackle climate change before it is too late.

China is slowing down, but it is not going to be a disaster.

”

DR FANG XINGHAI, vice-chairman of China's Securities Regulatory Commission, a key government watchdog.



# \$72m boost for skills training as building sector goes high-tech

Funds will be used to finance scholarship, sponsorship programmes for students and adults, says minister

**Ng Jun Sen**  
Business Correspondent

A \$72 million training fund has been set up to help the building industry move away from labour-intensive methods to more “smart” processes.

The funds, which have been earmarked from June last year to May next year, will go towards boosting skills in the sector, including financing existing scholarship and sponsorship programmes for students and adults, National Development Minister Lawrence Wong said yesterday.

The 118,000 Singaporeans working in the construction industry as well as architects and facility managers will benefit from the training fund.

“The construction industry is rapidly changing, and it is changing all over the world, including in Singapore,” said Mr Wong who, however, added that the changes in the industry were lagging behind those in other sectors like transport and finance.

He noted that venture funding in building technology was growing and traditional firms were starting to do more to transform how they build, picking up new capabilities in automation, prefabrication, and digital building and design methods.

“To make all these happen, our people are at the heart of this transformation journey. How far we go depends on the quality of the people we have,” said Mr Wong, who was speaking at an iBuildSG scholarship ceremony at the National University of Singapore.

The \$72 million fund will support an enhanced iBuildSG Scholarship and Sponsorship programme for those seeking academic qualifications on a full-time undergraduate, diploma or Institute of Technical Education (ITE) track.

There were 448 scholarships and sponsorships awarded to polytechnic and ITE students, university graduates and postgraduates yesterday.

The programme partners these students with industry firms so they will have a job in the sponsoring company on graduation.

The company will also provide on-the-job training programmes and part-time upgrading courses.

Previously, this sponsorship programme was open only to polytechnic and ITE graduates. University graduates are now eligible as well.

All those awarded scholarships and sponsorship will receive a \$3,000 training grant to boost their skills and competencies through courses. They will also be encouraged to stay on in the industry with a \$7,000 retention incentive one year after their bond with their sponsoring firm ends.

The existing Building Specialist Sponsorship programme, which supports the training of technical personnel, will also be extended from two to three years. This allows students to attend longer courses, such as part-time Nitec, higher Nitec and post-ITE development courses, said Mr Wong.

In addition, a new iBuildSG Tripartite Committee, comprising industry stakeholders from the unions, institutes of higher learning and trade associations and chambers, will find opportunities in attracting and developing talent.

The Building and Construction Authority will also launch an iBuildSG Club in April to attract secondary school and tertiary students to the building industry, helping them to figure out the courses they can take if they wish to pursue a career in the field.

ngjunsen@sph.com.sg



Scholarship and sponsorship recipients taking a selfie with National Development Minister Lawrence Wong (fourth from left) at the iBuildSG scholarship ceremony at the National University of Singapore yesterday. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

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# Possible areas of threat

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) cited these areas in its Singapore Terrorism Threat Assessment Report.

- ISLAMIC STATE IN IRAQ AND SYRIA (ISIS)**
- MHA says the most pressing threat to Singapore continues to emanate from ISIS. The militant group first emerged in 2014 when it attempted to set up a hyper-violent and extremist state in eastern Syria and northern Iraq. It has come to be known for using propaganda to radicalise. Despite heavy territorial losses it has faced in Iraq and Syria, MHA said some 20,000 to 30,000 fighters remain in the two countries. Its ideology has gone online and continues to attract supporters in Singapore and overseas.
  - ISIS-linked groups and sympathisers in the region continue to be active, like Jemaah Ansharut Daulah in Indonesia, which was responsible for the coordinated bombings in May last year that killed 28 people.
  - ISIS remains interested in the region – portraying South-east Asia as part of its caliphate – despite the end of the five-month siege of Marawi in the Philippines last October.
  - MHA says ISIS propaganda could attract foreign fighters to the region who may mount attacks in South-east Asia, including Singapore.
  - About 1,000 South-east Asians are believed to have travelled to join the conflict in Syria and Iraq, with a few known to have returned and plotted attacks in their home countries. MHA says more South-east Asian ISIS fighters could seek to return, given the group's heavy territorial losses in Syria and Iraq.
  - The release of terrorist prisoners in the region could also worsen the threat, as those who have not been adequately rehabilitated may return to terrorism activities.

- AL-QAEDA AND JEMAAH ISLAMIAH (JI)**
- There are signs that Al-Qaeda and JI have been regrouping and may again launch large-scale attacks.
  - The international focus on countering ISIS has provided Al-Qaeda with the space to rebuild its capabilities. Al-Qaeda is reviving its global networks and issuing more propaganda. It has also built strong bases in areas of conflict and instability, especially in the Middle East and Africa.
  - Some JI cells have been procuring arms and weapons. JI members have been joining pro-Al-Qaeda groups in Syria to acquire combat skills and experience.

- THREATS FROM HOME**
- Self-radicalised individuals are an increasing threat to Singapore. In the past two years, eight self-radicalised individuals were dealt with by MHA, bringing the total number since 2015 to 22.
  - A few radicalised Singaporeans have also managed to travel to Syria to participate in the conflict there. Two Singaporeans had travelled there with their families, and one, Megat Shahdan Abdul Samad, left to fight alongside ISIS. He is believed to have been killed.
  - Radicalisation among foreigners working in Singapore remains, although none investigated had any plans to mount attacks in Singapore.
  - Since 2015, 14 Indonesian domestic workers have been repatriated after they were found to have been radicalised.
  - Last year, three Malaysian work permit holders were arrested for their suspected involvement in terrorism-related activities. All three were repatriated to Malaysia.

Hariz Baharudin

## Only one in five feels attack may happen here in next 5 years

Only one in five Singaporeans sees terrorism as an imminent threat, even though most acknowledge that Singapore is a target for terrorists, a survey done by the Government has found.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) revealed these numbers alongside the second Singapore Terrorism Threat Assessment Report that it released yesterday.

For this study, 2,010 Singapore citizens and permanent residents representative of the national population and aged 15 years and above were polled last June and July.

According to MHA, close to 60 per cent of the respondents recognised Singapore as a target for terror attacks, but only 20 per cent felt that an attack might occur here within the next five years.

Should an attack happen, 93 per cent felt that all Singaporeans will

stand united regardless of race or religion, and 96 per cent said they were willing to help other Singaporeans, said the ministry.

Nearly 90 per cent would contact the relevant authorities should they spot suspicious behaviour in public places, but the survey found people were less likely to report such behaviour among relatives or friends – only three in four would do so.

MHA said: “Where friends and family are involved, respondents generally preferred discussing with other friends and family members on what action to take or to further observe the situation first, rather than to contact the authorities.”

The survey also gave an indication of the effectiveness of SGSecure, the national terrorism awareness movement, with three in four saying they were aware of it.

A larger proportion of respon-

dents who were aware of SGSecure displayed a sense of vigilance, said MHA. For instance, about four in five of those aware of SGSecure kept a lookout for suspicious behaviours and packages in public places, whereas only about three in five of those who were unaware of SGSecure did so.

The survey also found that 92 per cent of SGSecure-aware respondents agreed it was their responsibility to safeguard Singapore's safety and security; this number was 86 per cent among those unaware of SGSecure.

MHA highlighted some efforts from the SGSecure movement, which it said has shifted its focus to preparedness.

For instance, more than 51,000 businesses have since appointed at least one SGSecure representative who will serve as their organisation's link to the authorities in a crisis and drive workplace emergency preparedness programmes.

It also said a quarter of all grassroots leaders and volunteers have been equipped with at least one emergency preparedness skill, like performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation or using an automated external defibrillator.

Hariz Baharudin

## Tackling the terrorism scourge

### HOW THE PUBLIC VIEWS THE THREAT AND SGSECURE

The Ministry of Home Affairs polled a total of 2,010 respondents here in June and July last year to gauge public perception and sentiments towards the terror threat, and also about the SGSecure national terrorism awareness movement. Below are the key findings.



## Terror groups still potent as they take the fight online

The danger of an attack hitting Singapore continues to be high due to the fact that terrorists have mastered technology and media to further their causes, and also due to the country's strategic location, experts told The Straits Times.

They were responding to a report issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) yesterday that said Singapore's terrorism threat level remains high as more radicalised individuals here are uncovered and terror groups make moves internationally.

Compared with the past, terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have taken the fight online to recruit and spread their messages through social media and the Internet, said Singapore-based counter-terrorism expert Yaniv Peretz.

Mr Peretz, the programme direc-

tor for Certified Counter Terrorism Practitioner, which trains security professionals, said: “ISIS provides guides and propaganda materials for followers all around the world. This is the reason why we have seen a significant rise in lone-wolf attacks which are committed by radicalised individuals over the past years.”

Ustaz Mohamed Ali, an assistant professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Nanyang Technological University, said these lone wolves respond to the extremist and exclusivist messages of these terror groups.

“A terror attack does not have to be orchestrated by those outside of Singapore – it can strike from the inside too because of the people who have been radicalised by these groups,” said Dr Mohamed Ali, who is also the vice-chairman of the Re-

ligious Rehabilitation Group.

RSIS' professor of security studies Rohan Gunaratna said that Singapore's location makes it a fertile region for terrorists like ISIS to strike, adding that its neighbours such as Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines have suffered significant terror attacks.

While some might think that the threat from ISIS has diminished since it has lost most of its territory in Iraq and Syria, Dr Rohan said this is false because the group is now growing overseas.

“ISIS has shrunk its battle space in Iraq and Syria, but it is expanding in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Thinking that the threat has diminished or has plateaued is incorrect as ISIS is entering a new phase of global expansion,” he added.

In its report, MHA revealed that a survey it conducted showed only one in five respondents felt that the terrorism threat is imminent, with an attack occurring here within the next five years.

To this, Mr Peretz said: “As we try to rationalise things, we sometimes become complacent and avoid the possibility of the threat till it is at our doorstep or when we actually experience it.”

Hariz Baharudin

ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS



# Dyson's S'pore move to take advantage of opportunities in Asia

Decision comes just months after plan to set up its first electric car plant in Republic

Seow Bei Yi  
Business Correspondent

British home appliance manufacturer Dyson will transfer its head office's registration to Singapore, a decision that comes just months after it announced that it will set up its first electric car plant here.

This means Dyson – famed for its bagless vacuum cleaners and bladeless fans – will become a Singapore-based business and primarily be regulated by the law here.

“What we have seen in the last few years is an acceleration of the opportunities to grow a company from a revenue perspective in Asia,” Dyson chief executive Jim Rowan said in a media conference yesterday.

“All of our manufacturing and a majority of our future investments will be in Asia,” he added, noting that regional countries such as China have grown at a rapid pace to the size of mature markets like the United States and Japan.

Technology adoption in places like India and South-east Asia is expected to accelerate in the coming years as well, he said. This is among the reasons Dyson's chief financial officer and chief legal officer will be relocated to Singapore very shortly, and its team built up here.

Mr Rowan said the decision did not have anything to do with Brexit or tax benefits, but that it is for the company to be in the best position to secure opportunities and keep an eye on its investments. Mr Rowan is based in Singapore as well.

He said Brexit is unlikely to impact Dyson, given that its supply chain is based in South-east Asia. He also said Singapore's corporate tax rate of 17 per cent – lower than Britain's – would mean only a negligible difference in what would be paid.

He stressed that the move to relocate to Singapore was an “evolutionary decision” due to the changing landscape.

Dyson's centre of gravity has been shifting towards Asia, which in 2017 generated almost 75 per cent of its revenue growth.

The firm already employs 1,100 people here, and plans to double the size of its research and operations. Its Singapore Technology Centre in Science Park will double in size as well. Its global research and development team grew to 5,853 engineers and scientists last year, with investments deepening in areas including energy storage and robotics.

Dyson has also announced that its profits last year broke £1 billion (\$1.8 billion) for the first time, growing 33 per cent to £1.1 billion from 2017. This came as investments in advanced manufacturing and research reached a new high, while revenue growth continued, in part on the back of new products such as its new hairdryer and air purification technology.

The firm also announced that former Infiniti Motor Company president Roland Krueger will join Dyson in April, in the lead-up to the expected completion of its electric car manufacturing facility here by next year. The first model could be rolled out by 2021.

Mr Krueger will be based in Singapore as well, and will oversee all aspects of Dyson's automotive project as it approaches launch.

The company has about 430 people working on the car, and expects this to grow as well. Its Singapore manufacturing facility is part of its £2 billion move into automobiles.

Singapore's expertise in advanced manufacturing was among the factors that made it an ideal location to manufacture the car, the firm said, adding: “An increasing majority of Dyson's customers... are now in Asia. This shift has been occurring for some time and will quicken as Dyson brings its electric vehicle to market.”

The company ceased British production of domestic appliances in 2003. It has facilities in Malaysia and the Philippines as well.

Last year, Dyson continued its £31 million investment in higher education in Britain, where core creative and engineering parts will remain.

byseow@sph.com.sg



The acoustic chamber at Dyson Singapore. The British firm already employs 1,100 people here, and plans to double the size of its R&D. PHOTOS: DYSON



PIVOT TO ASIA

What we have seen in the last few years is an acceleration of the opportunities to grow a company from a revenue perspective in Asia. All of our manufacturing and a majority of our future investments will be in Asia.



DYSON CHIEF EXECUTIVE JIM ROWAN (left).

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50,000 to < 200,000	0.38	1.52		1.62	
200,000 to 3 million	0.50	1.40		1.50	

Fresh Funds Deposit in Prestige Savings Account (S\$)	Base Rates (% p.a.)	January 2019		February 2019	
		Bonus Rates (% p.a.)	Total Rate* (% p.a.)	Bonus Rates (% p.a.)	Total Rate* (% p.a.)
20,000 to < 200,000	0.38	1.62	2.00	1.72	2.10
200,000 to 5 million	0.50	1.50		1.60	

\* Total rate is derived by adding the base rate, along with the promotional bonus rate for the corresponding months. In the event that we offer a higher bonus rate on iSAVvy or Prestige Savings Account during the Promotion Period, you will enjoy the higher bonus rate on your incremental balance for that month.

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Lawyers for the plaintiffs and defendants in the multimillion-dollar civil suits over the management of the Aljunied-Hougang Town Council handed their written closing submissions to the High Court last Friday. Political Correspondent **Adrian Lim** reports.

## WP MPs plotted to reward supporters: Plaintiffs

The Workers' Party (WP) MPs who are being sued for allegedly breaching their fiduciary duties went to their court hearings last October with "scripted and dishonest answers in a pitiful attempt to hide the truth", lawyers said in their written closing submissions.

Party chairman Sylvia Lim, one of the defendants in the multimillion-dollar lawsuits, was also an "evasive witness willing to make untruthful and misleading statements in the face of difficult questions", the lawyers alleged.

Among the arguments they put forth were observations of how the WP MPs allegedly behaved on the stand when being cross-examined.

These were in the two closing submissions, each 150 pages long, submitted to the High Court last Friday by lawyers representing Aljunied-Hougang Town Council (AHTC) and Pasir Ris-Punggol Town Council (PRPTC).

AHTC and PRPTC are suing five WP town councillors – including Ms Lim, WP's secretary-general Pritam Singh and its former chief Low Thia Kiang – over alleged improper payments made to a former managing agent and other contractors when the councillors ran AHTC.

PRPTC is suing to recover its share of losses incurred when Punggol East constituency was run by AHTC from 2013 to 2015.

The submissions, which come after a 17-day trial last October, noted how Mr Low and Ms Lim "recklessly" appointed a new managing agent for AHTC in 2011 without a tender and any regard for the interests of residents. The WP had won Aljunied GRC in the 2011 General Election.

Their move was allegedly to benefit WP supporters How Weng Fan and her husband, the late Mr Danny Loh, who were the main shareholders of the new agent, FM Solutions & Services (FMSS), said the lawyers.

Ms How, Mr Loh and FMSS are the other defendants in the suits.

AHTC is seeking compensation of \$33.7 million in fees paid by the town council to managing agent FMSS and its service provider between 2011 and 2015.

Its lawyers from Shook Lin & Bok listed several ways in which the defendants breached their fiduciary duties, like Ms Lim failing to call a tender for the Essential Maintenance Service Unit contract and giving it to FMSS.

They said "a particularly disturbing consequence of the appointment of FMSS, and the fact that Ms How, Mr Loh and FMSS were effectively given carte blanche over AHTC's payment process, was that FMSS enjoyed extraordinary profits (an increase of more than 300 per cent) in the period between 2011 and 2015".

Mr Low and Ms Lim also made the decision to appoint FMSS as AHTC's managing agent despite being aware of the severe conflicts of interest, and failed to disclose the shareholding of FMSS at a town council meeting in August 2011, the lawyers added.

Mr Low, Ms Lim, Ms How and Mr Loh also set up and allowed a system that let conflicted persons approve payments to themselves.

PRPTC's lawyers from Drew & Napier, in disputing the defendants' claims that they were not fiduciaries, gave five reasons for rejecting them. These include the fact that the defendants had custody and control over the assets and property of AHTC, and a legitimate expectation by the residents that they would abide by their obligations under the town council laws.

PRPTC lawyers also flagged Mr Singh's testimony in October, when he said he could not recall certain things, such as when he was told about the incorporation of FMSS, and details of a May 2011 meeting the WP MPs had.

It was during this meeting that the MPs decided a managing agent would be appointed, despite being aware that Aljunied Town Council had an incumbent agent – CPG Fa-

cilities Management. Mr Low sent out an e-mail on the decision and copied it to Ms How.

Both Mr Low and Ms Lim, who took the stand before Mr Singh did, were grilled on the e-mail.

PRPTC's lawyers, led by Senior Counsel Davinder Singh, wrote: "Realising that the e-mail was devastating and that Mr Low and Ms Lim's evidence about that meeting and the e-mail was not credible, he took sanctuary in memory loss."

The lawyers also said: "Once they (the WP MPs) won the trust of the voters, they promptly set out to thwart those very interests by sinister scheming and blatant breaches of the law.

"They plotted to reward their supporters, who, driven by naked financial self-interest, happily played along. They appointed people who they viewed as cat's paws, and who failed miserably to discharge their duties to AHTC."

"The elected members operated furtively, engaged in wilful misdirection, and constructed an alternative reality not just to avoid getting caught for breaking the law, but to create scapegoats of innocent people," they added.

Lawyers from both sides are expected to reply to each other's written submissions next month. After that, a court date will be set for oral submissions before Justice Kannan Ramesh delivers his judgment.

(From left) Workers' Party chairman Sylvia Lim, former WP chief Low Thia Kiang, WP MP Png Eng Huat and WP secretary-general Pritam Singh outside the Supreme Court last October. ST FILE PHOTO



## WP town councillors acted in good faith at all times: Defence

The case built against five Workers' Party (WP) town councillors, who are facing two multimillion-dollar civil suits over how they ran their town council, does not take into account the actual circumstances that they faced, said their lawyers.

In their closing submissions handed to the High Court last Friday, the lawyers representing WP's chairman Sylvia Lim, former chief Low Thia Kiang and secretary-general Pritam Singh also reiterated that the trio had acted in good faith at all times, and noted the plaintiffs did not call any "factual witnesses" to challenge the WP MPs' evidence about the circumstances after the 2011 General Election.

The submissions came after a 17-day hearing last October, during which the five WP town councillors took the stand to defend themselves against allegations that they had breached their fiduciary duties in running the Aljunied-Hougang Town Council (AHTC).

The case centres on \$33.7 million that AHTC paid to its former managing agent FM Solutions & Services (FMSS) and service provider

FM Solutions and Integrated Services between 2011 and 2015.

AHTC and Pasir Ris-Punggol Town Council (PRPTC) filed separate lawsuits in 2017 to recover the monies from the payments, which are alleged to be improper and void.

In the 150-page submission, lawyers from Tan Rajah and Cheah, who represent the WP town councillors, set out their case for why there was nothing improper about the appointments and payments.

They also made the point that town councils are to be managed by the elected MPs with as much latitude as possible under the law. Ms Lim, who was delegated authority to act on AHTC's behalf, had waived the tender for a new managing agent in 2011 and appointed FMSS for one year.

But in the course of cross-examination, the plaintiffs "attempted to build their case by subjecting the defendants to the standards of perfect hindsight using hypothetical scenarios that did not take into consideration the actual circumstances that the town councillors faced at the time", the lawyers said.

After winning Aljunied GRC from the People's Action Party (PAP) in 2011, the WP MPs decided to have an alternative managing agent as a contingency in case the incumbent, CPG Facilities Management, decided to pull out, the lawyers argued.

Mr Low spoke to Ms How Weng Fan, the then secretary of the WP-run Hougang Town Council, and her husband Danny Loh about setting up a managing agent firm and tapping experienced staff from Hougang Town Council (HTC). FMSS was thus formed.

"It was alleged at trial by the plaintiffs that the contingency plan involved benefiting WP's supporters on the basis that HTC's staff were WP supporters. This allegation... is baseless and unsupported by any evidence," the lawyers said.

The legal team, led by Senior Counsel Chelva Rajah, also said the only basis of the claims by AHTC and PRPTC is audit reports by KPMG and PwC.

AHTC appointed KPMG in 2016 to look into its books, after the Auditor-General's Office found significant governance lapses in a special audit. PRPTC appointed PwC to look into AHTC's accounts.

Defence lawyers said the witnesses, KPMG executive director Owen Hawkes and PwC partner Goh Thien Phong, "have no personal knowledge of the facts and circumstances existing at the material time when the town councillors made the decisions".

Little weight should be accorded to the evidence given by Mr Hawkes and Mr Goh, the lawyers said, adding "it is indisputable that the accountants have gone beyond their remit by second-guessing whether the contracts and appointments should have been made".

They added that no "factual witnesses" were called by the plaintiffs to challenge the evidence given by the town councillors of the circumstances they faced after they were elected in the 2011 elections.

During the hearings, the town councillors spoke about the special circumstances they faced, such as the unprecedented case of a GRC changing hands from the PAP to an opposition party, and the incumbent managing agent no longer willing to continue to work with the WP MPs, the lawyers noted.

"The town councillors made the decisions they did with the residents' best interests at heart," the lawyers said.

They also said Mr Jeffrey Chua, then secretary of Aljunied Town Council, who was involved in the handover, should have been called as a witness to testify on a May 13 letter which the plaintiffs referred to as purported evidence of CPG being told it was going to be replaced. The letter sought to obtain data relating to residents, the lawyers said.

The other three defendants in the lawsuits are FMSS, Ms How and the late Mr Loh, who is represented by Ms How. After AHTC appointed FMSS as managing agent, Mr Loh was made secretary and Ms How, general manager, of AHTC, from 2011 to 2015.

Lawyers from Netto and Magin said in closing submissions that these roles were for administrative purposes and did not carry fiduciary duties. Mr Loh and Ms How had acted honestly and in good faith, and had disclosed fully their interest in FMSS to AHTC's town councillors, their lawyers added.

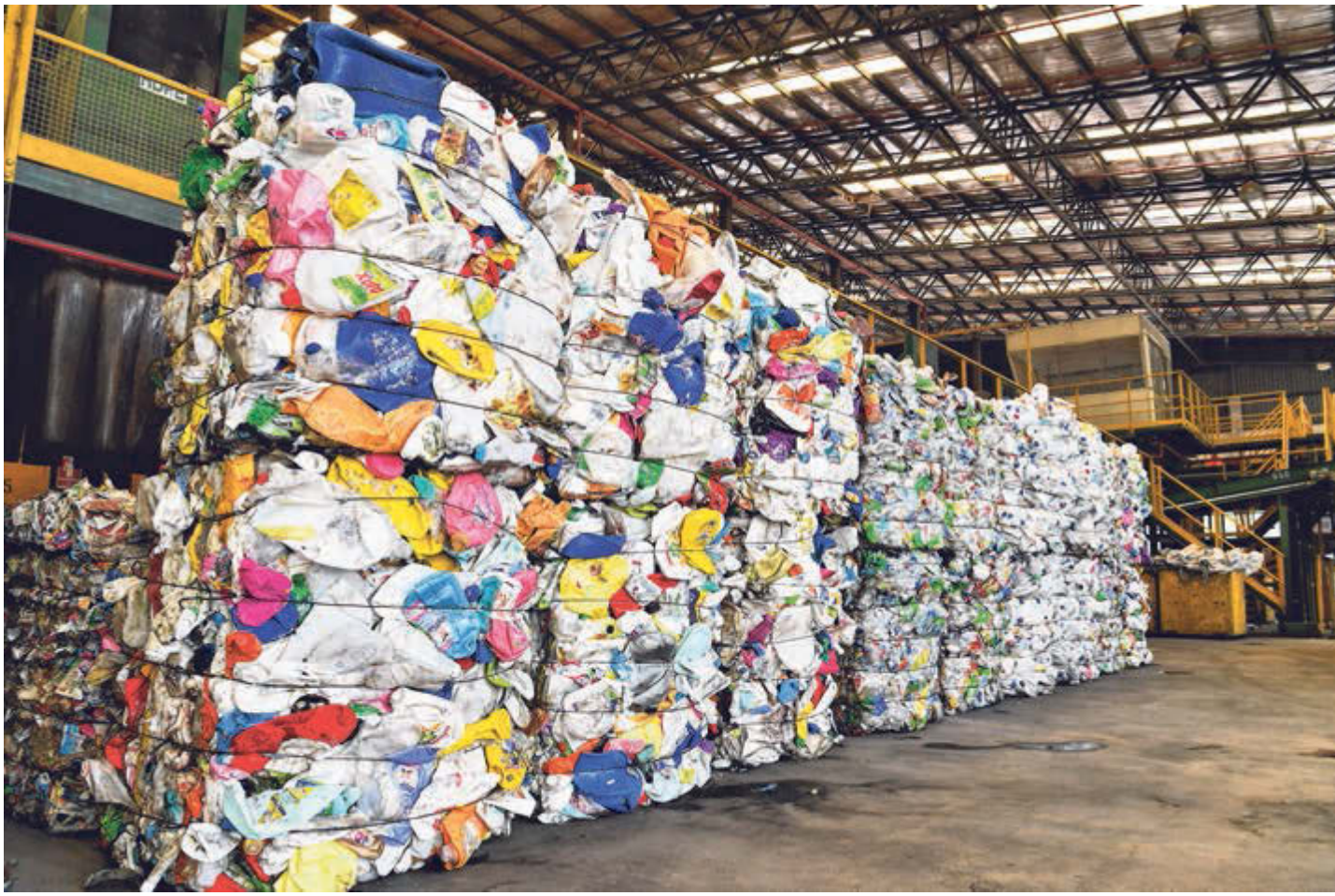
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## \$2m grant from next month to fund zero-waste initiatives



Above: Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State for the Environment and Water Resources, flanked by Mr Tan Chee Boon (in orange), manager (Recovery) of Sembcorp Environment, and Mr Neo Hong Keat, senior vice-president of SembWaste, watching workers sort recyclables collected from the blue recycling bins in Singapore, during a tour of the Sembcorp materials recovery facility yesterday.

Right: Used plastic that have been made into bales for onward recycling. About 40 per cent to 50 per cent of waste at the facility is contaminated or not recyclable – for example, with people dumping rotting food waste onto clean paper and plastic. ST PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG



### Cheryl Teh

People looking to kick-start ground-up initiatives to drive waste reduction and recycling can bid for \$2 million worth of funding from next month.

Senior Minister of State for the Environment and Water Resources Amy Khor announced yesterday that the funds are for projects specifically targeting zero waste, particularly in the areas of packaging waste, food waste, and electri-

cal and electronic waste (e-waste).

These waste streams are key areas that Singapore can improve a lot on, Dr Khor said at a site visit to a Sembcorp facility in Tuas.

The Republic is the second-largest e-waste producer in the region, according to a study by global think-tank United Nations University, which estimated that Singapore generated about 109,000 tonnes of e-waste – 19.5kg a person – in 2014.

"With this zero-waste grant, we want to encourage people to put forth initiatives and projects that

will help us drive recycling forward," said Dr Khor.

She said the grant is one of many initiatives the National Environment Agency (NEA) will be putting in place as Singapore works towards its vision of a zero-waste nation.

"We hope to work towards being zero-waste efficient. We will encourage people to, firstly, reduce their waste up front – and to not only recycle more, but recycle right," said Dr Khor.

She encouraged individuals and groups to come forward with good

ideas and projects for reducing waste and recycling.

According to the NEA, the grant will encourage reducing, reusing and recycling to conserve the Republic's resources and extend the lifespan of the Semakau landfill.

The grant will also pave the way for a zero-waste nation by having a circular economy where waste is reused and re-purposed continually through a loop of recycling.

Those on the front lines of waste management say that people need to learn to recycle correctly.

Some 50 to 60 tonnes of waste arrives daily at the Sembcorp materials recovery facility in Tuas, where sorters work six days a week to remove recyclable materials from non-recyclables, said Mr Tan Chee Boon, manager of the facility.

The waste that arrives at Sembcorp's facility then goes through bag splitters and several layers of sorting, where paper is separated from plastic and metal, and recyclables are salvaged from a sea of contaminated material.

Mr Tan estimates that about 40

per cent to 50 per cent of waste at the facility is contaminated or not recyclable, and has to be sent to Sembcorp's commercial and industrial waste plant on Jurong Island.

This, Mr Tan said, is chiefly due to contamination – for example, with people dumping rotting food waste onto clean paper and plastic.

Individuals, interest groups, non-governmental and grassroots organisations, and corporations can apply for the grant from Feb 1.

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## Special meeting to select new Malaysian king cloaked in intrigue

**Tinge of uncertainty as routine selection process thrown a curve ball**

**Leslie Lopez**  
Regional Correspondent  
In Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's nine royal families will convene a special meeting tomorrow to pick the country's new king, or Yang Di-Pertuan Agong as he is officially referred to.

But what is normally a routine selection process has been shrouded this time in intrigue, some behind-the-scenes lobbying and a tinge of uncertainty, following the surprise resignation early this month of Kelantan's Sultan Muhammad V.

Malaysia's hereditary rulers, who enjoy the special position as protectors of Islam and champions of the politically dominant Malay race, operate with utmost secrecy and largely through consensus when dealing with their internal affairs.

The reasons behind Sultan Muhammad's sudden resignation have never been publicly disclosed.

But there has been speculation that his brother rulers had pressured him to resign because of the general unease among them over his recent reported marriage to a Russian model, Ms Oksana Voevodina, 25.

Intrigue also surrounds the selection of his successor because Malaysia's royal households have never faced a situation like the one that confronts them today.

While kings have died in office in the past, Sultan Muhammad's resignation before his five-year term expires at the end of 2021 is without precedent.

Under Malaysia's unique rotation system, in which the country's rulers choose a king from among themselves to reign for five years, the head of the Pahang royal household is next in line, followed by the Sultan of Johor and then the Sultan of Perak.

The fairly straightforward selection process was thrown a curve ball two weeks ago when the ailing 88-year-old Sultan Ahmad Shah of Pahang abdicated in favour of his son, Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, 59. The abdication has been widely viewed as a bid by the Pahang royal household to keep its place in the rotation.

The Pahang abdication was to some extent anticipated. But it has also stirred a quiet legal debate in recent weeks among royal watchers and senior constitutional lawyers.

Some argue that there are provisions in the Constitution which rule that an abdication would result in the new ruler being pushed to the



The abdication of the ailing 88-year-old Sultan Ahmad Shah of Pahang in favour of his son, Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah (above), 59, is widely viewed as a bid by the Pahang royal household to keep its place in the rotation, though it was to some extent anticipated. PHOTO: BERNAMA



Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar at Thaipusam celebrations yesterday. Under Malaysia's rotation system in normal circumstances, the head of the Pahang royal household is next in line, followed by the Sultan of Johor. PHOTO: BERNAMA

end of the rotation. Based on this interpretation, Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar of Johor would be slated to take over as the new Agong.

But there is also a body of opinion that insists that the constitutional provision applied only to the first round of rotations after independence in 1957 and in the current situation, the leader of the Pahang royal household would be the successor to Sultan Muhammad of Kelantan.

The constitutional debate aside,

senior lawyers noted that the Conference of Rulers – which comprises heads of the nine royal families – enjoys wide discretion and can consider the length of his reign and the experience of a potential king when they meet tomorrow to carry out the secret ballot to pick the new heir to the throne.

The outcome of the meeting will be closely watched because it has implications for Malaysia's politics as well as its bilateral relations with

**The dynamics in the relationship between the soon-to-be elected king and Dr Mahathir's administration is a matter of concern because of the radical change in the country's political landscape following the spectacular ousting of the Barisan Nasional ruling coalition in the last general election in May last year.**

neighbouring Singapore.

Relations between the country's royal houses and Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad have been prickly.

During his first premiership, which began in 1981 and lasted 22 years, Tun Dr Mahathir took on the sultans on three separate occasions and, in every encounter, secured major victories by curbing their already limited powers.

The dynamics in the relationship between the soon-to-be elected

king and Dr Mahathir's administration is a matter of concern because of the radical change in the country's political landscape following the spectacular ousting of the Barisan Nasional (BN) ruling coalition in the last general election in May last year.

The challenge facing Dr Mahathir's Pakatan Harapan coalition is that its election victory did not come with strong backing from the country's Malays, who make up more than 60 per cent of the population and who hold the country's hereditary rulers in high esteem.

Government politicians acknowledge that cordial relations between the rulers and the Malaysian executive would be conducive for PH to attract a stronger Malay support base.

Who becomes king could also have implications for Singapore. The appointment of the Sultan of Johor, which is not ruled out at the moment, could present a new dimension to the growing tensions in bilateral relations with Malaysia.

The state borders Singapore and the king could have an influence on a range of bilateral issues, including the crooked bridge project mooted by Dr Mahathir, as well as maritime and airspace disputes.

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## KL scraps ECRL deal with China firm, seeks replacement

**Trinna Leong**  
Malaysia Correspondent  
In Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia is seeking a new contractor to build the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL), after terminating the original contract awarded to China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) yesterday, a source told The Straits Times.

It is understood that the government is seeking to halve the estimated project cost of RM81 billion (\$27 billion) to RM40 billion.

Work on the 688km railway line linking the east and west coasts of Peninsular Malaysia has been suspended since last July, as part of the new Pakatan Harapan administration's review of large-scale infrastructure projects after the coalition won the elections in May.

Negotiations to reduce the

project cost – initially pegged at RM55 billion when the plans were launched in November 2016 – have continued with CCCC since then, with government adviser Daim Zainuddin leading the talks.

The Straits Times understands that the government laid down a maximum cost of RM40 billion and asked for more local products and services to be included in the works. However, CCCC could not meet these requirements, resulting in negotiations coming to an end.

CCCC did not respond to a request for comment.

Tun Daim told reporters yesterday that the railway project is still on, with negotiations still ongoing. He did not elaborate who the ongoing negotiations were with.

CCCC was originally awarded the engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning contract for the ECRL, which was to be

funded by Malaysia taking a soft loan from Export-Import Bank of China to cover 85 per cent of the cost. The remaining sum was to be raised from local bond issues.

The ECRL was among a handful of China-funded mega infrastructure projects entered into by the previous Barisan Nasional government that was scrutinised by the new administration in a bid to tackle state debts totalling over RMI trillion.

Two pipeline projects with China costing RM9.4 billion were cancelled after the government found that only 13 per cent of the works had been completed despite nearly 90 per cent of the project sum being paid out.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had described the ECRL contract as "strange" in an interview last July.

"That contract is strange," Tun Dr



A deserted China Communications Construction Company site in Pahang last year. The Pakatan Harapan government had issued a stop-work order in July after winning the general election. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

Mahathir told business paper The Edge.

"The contractor must be from China and the lending is from China. And the money is not supposed to come here but (kept abroad) to pay the contractor in

China," the paper quoted him as saying.

Touted as a game-changer when it was first launched, the ECRL was meant to be a land bridge linking Kuantan Port with Port Klang that would allow shipped cargo to

bypass Singapore.

Construction sites along the 12-passenger station route have been left abandoned since the stop-work order was issued in July.

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## ‘Bikini Climber’ dies after ravine fall in Taiwan

TAIPEI • Taiwanese rescue teams tried yesterday to retrieve the body of a dead hiker who became famous on social media for taking selfies on top of mountain peaks dressed in a bikini.

Ms Gigi Wu – dubbed “Bikini Climber” by fans – used a satellite phone last Saturday to tell friends she had fallen down a ravine in Taiwan’s Yushan National Park and hurt herself badly, Agence France-Presse (AFP) said.

Rescue helicopters struggled to reach her because of bad weather and officials eventually located her lifeless body on Monday.

“The weather conditions in the mountains are not good. We have asked our rescuers to move the body to a more open space and after the weather clears, we will make a request for a helicopter to bring the body down,” Nantou County Fire and Rescue Services’ Lin Cheng-yi told reporters.

Officials said Ms Wu had told friends she was unable to move the lower half of her body after a fall of some 20m to 30m but was able to give her coordinates, AFP said.

She is the latest in a string of social media adventure seekers who have met an untimely end.

Last week, the bodies of an Indian couple were found at the bottom of a popular overlook in California’s Yosemite National Park after hikers alerted officials to their camera equipment at the top of the cliff.

New Taipei City native Wu, 36, built up a sizeable social media following by posting photos of herself in a bikini at the top of mountains. She usually wore hiking clothes to scale the mountains, only changing into a bikini once she reached the top.

In an interview with local channel FTV last year, she said she had scaled more than 100 peaks in four years.

When asked why she did it, she replied: “It just looks so beautiful, what’s not to like?”

Taiwan boasts a spine of towering peaks down its middle that regularly top 3,000m. In winter, temperatures routinely drop well below freezing on the mountain slopes.

Hundreds of people have posted comments on her Facebook page, some applauding her for her novel approach.



Social media star Gigi Wu (left), known for posting photos of herself in a bikini on mountaintops, used a satellite phone last Saturday to tell friends she had fallen down a ravine in Taiwan’s Yushan National Park and badly injured herself. Rescue workers struggled to reach her because of bad weather and officials eventually located her lifeless body on Monday.

PHOTO: GIGI WU/FACEBOOK

## China warns US, Canada over extraditing Huawei CFO

It says it will respond to measures taken and slams both for abusing their bilateral treaty

**Danson Cheong**  
China Correspondent  
In Beijing

China has warned the United States against proceeding with the extradition of Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou, threatening action if it does.

China’s foreign ministry spokesman Hua Chunying issued the warning at a regular press briefing yesterday after news broke that Washington intended to file an extradition request for Ms Meng, who is currently under house arrest in Canada.

“China will of course take action in response to measures taken by the US,” Ms Hua said.

“Everyone has to be responsible for their actions and I think the same is true for a country. We hope both Canada and the US will recognise the serious nature of this incident and take steps to correct their mistakes.”

Ms Hua said both the US and Canada have abused the bilateral extradition treaty between them and called on Washington to “immediately rectify its mistake” and not issue a formal extradition request to Ottawa.

Ms Meng’s arrest was “plainly aimed at putting unreasonable pressure on China’s high-tech enterprises”, she added.

Beijing’s latest salvo worsens the already strained ties between China and Canada, which arrested Ms Meng on Dec 1 at Vancouver airport following a request from the US.

In what was seen as retaliation, China later detained two Canadians – former diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor – on the grounds that they violated the country’s national security.

Shortly afterwards, another Canadian was sentenced to death on drug charges after an appeal by prosecutors.

On the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos yesterday, Huawei chairman Liang Hua said the company will call for a quick resolution of Ms Meng’s case.

He added that the company would allow foreign officials to visit its labs, as the Chinese company faces suspicion from Western countries that its telecoms equipment could be used for espionage.

The US wants to extradite Ms Meng so she can face charges for



China’s foreign ministry spokesman said placing Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou (left) under house arrest was “plainly aimed at putting unreasonable pressure on China’s high-tech enterprises”. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

violating US sanctions against Iran.

Canada’s Globe and Mail reported yesterday that Washington had informed Ottawa of its intention to proceed with a formal extradition request, which it has to file by Jan 30.

The report said Canada’s Ambassador to the US David MacNaughton met several times with senior White House and US State Department officials about Ms Meng’s case, during which he expressed Ottawa’s anger and resentment with it.

“We do not like that it is our citizens who are being punished,” Mr MacNaughton said. “(The Americans) are the ones seeking to have the full force of American law brought against (Ms Meng) and yet we are the ones who are paying the price. Our citizens are.”

After a formal request for extradition from the US, a Canadian court has 30 days to decide whether it complies with the treaty. Canada’s Minister of Justice will have to issue a formal order for extradition.

But Ms Meng will have several opportunities to appeal and this could delay any final decision for months or years, reported the

Globe and Mail.

The newspaper also published an article on Monday by a former Canadian spy chief, who said Ottawa should ban Huawei from supplying equipment for its next-generation telecoms networks, citing security concerns.

Separately, on Monday, over 140 former diplomats and scholars from various countries issued an open letter to Chinese President Xi Jinping, calling for the release of Mr Kovrig and Mr Spavor.

The signatories wrote that Mr Kovrig was the North-east Asia expert for the International Crisis Group, an NGO whose mission was to “build a more peaceful world”. Mr Spavor, they said, had worked to build links between North Korea, China, the US and Canada.

“However, Kovrig’s and Spavor’s detentions send a message that this kind of constructive work is unwelcome and even risky in China,” said the letter.

Ms Hua called the former Canadian spy chief’s claims “nonsense”, and said that the open letter showed “disrespect” for Chinese law.

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## Lion Air crash: Families want unconditional compensation

JAKARTA • Families of those killed in the Lion Air crash nearly three months ago are demanding the airline fulfil its obligations by fully compensating all passengers’ next of kin without conditions.

A group of the victims’ families went to the House of Representatives in Jakarta on Monday to protest against what they said was unfair compensation.

“Lion Air has yet to meet its obligation (to compensate these families). Therefore, we demand the airline fulfil its responsibility,” Mr Aprilia Supaliyanto, the lawyer representing the families of Flight JT610, told reporters.

A member of the group, Mr Anton Sahadi, who lost two cousins, said most of the families of passengers and crew members had received 50 million rupiah (S\$4,790) in compensation from state-owned insurance company Jasa Raharja.

The compensation was given in accordance with the law and a 2017 finance ministerial regulation.

However, Lion Air has yet to compensate each family for their loss.

The obligation on the compensation is stipulated in Article 3 of Transportation Ministerial Regulation No. 77/2011 on airlines’ responsibilities.

The provision requires airlines to provide up to 1.25 billion rupiah in compensation for each passenger killed in an accident.

“Lion Air once offered to pay each family of the victims 1.3 billion rupiah in compensation for their loss. However, the compensation comes along with prerequisites that include a clause saying we cannot sue them in the future if we accept the money,” Mr Anton said. “We want unconditional compensation because this offer restricts our rights (to get what we deserve),” he added.

The lawyer said such preconditions potentially hurt the families as they could get a higher amount than promised by the airline.

The plane, a new Boeing 737 Max 8 aircraft, crashed on Oct 29 in the Java Sea shortly after taking off from Jakarta en route to Pangkalpinang, Bangka Belitung Islands, killing all 189 passengers and crew members – including three minors – on board.

At least 64 families have rejected Lion Air’s offer of compensation, while 52 families are thought to have accepted it.

Lion Air spokesman Danang Mandala Prihantoro and the Transportation Ministry’s air transportation director-general Polana Pramesti were not immediately available for comment.

Separately, the Indonesian authorities do not plan to provide a public update on the contents of the cockpit voice recorder from the crashed plane, until a final report is released in August or September, an official said yesterday.

The contents of the jet’s second black box, which were recovered on Jan 14, could provide a detailed account of the last actions of the pilots.

The recording needs to be filtered first due to “background sounds” hindering the transcription, said Mr Soerjanto Tjahjono, chief of the National Transportation Safety Committee (KNKT).

“It might take one or two weeks because it was noisy inside (the cockpit),” he told Reuters.

The transcript would not be made public until KNKT’s final report is released “between August to September”, he said.

THE JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK, REUTERS

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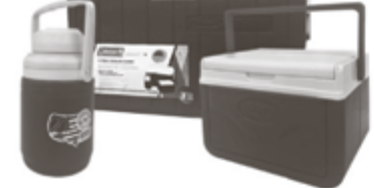
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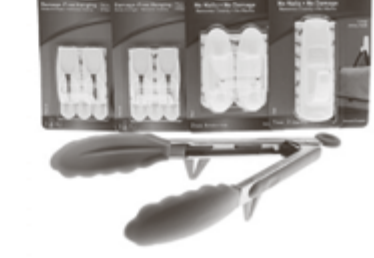
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# Bashir's release is conditional: Jokowi

He clarifies radical cleric must, as with all reformed terrorists, pledge allegiance to Indonesia, Pancasila

Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja and Linda Yulisman  
Indonesia Correspondents  
In Jakarta

President Joko Widodo has clarified that radical cleric Abu Bakar Bashir would only be released from prison if he pledged allegiance to the Republic of Indonesia and the state ideology Pancasila, as is required of all reformed terrorists.

"This is a conditional release, not a pure release, so all the requirements have to be met. It is not possible for me to breach the regulations," Mr Joko told reporters at the presidential palace yesterday.

Mr Joko's remarks come after widespread criticism of the government's decision last Friday to release Bashir, the 80-year-old spiritual leader of South-east Asia terrorist group Jemaah Islamiah (JI), on



Radical Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir being escorted by anti-terror police at an appeal trial in Central Java in 2016. The decision to release him had drawn strong criticism both domestically and internationally. PHOTO: EPA

humanitarian grounds because of his deteriorating health.

Mr Joko's legal adviser on his presidential campaign had said that day that Bashir would be given an unconditional release this week.

JI was responsible for the 2002 Bali bombings, Indonesia's deadliest

terrorist attack in which 202 people were killed, 88 of them Australian.

The decision to release Bashir had drawn strong criticism both domestically and internationally – especially from Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison – with Bashir still seen as a threat.

This latest clarification, and the government's announcement on Monday that the release decision would be reviewed, appears to backtrack on the controversial plan to free the cleric.

Bashir was the alleged mastermind of the 2002 Bali bombings, although he was never convicted for the terrorist incident.

He has been in jail since his arrest in 2009, and was in 2011 sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for funding a terrorist training camp in Indonesia's westernmost province of Aceh.

Vice-President Jusuf Kalla separately told reporters yesterday that the government's review would cover legal aspects of the release and would be carried out independently, not taking into account views from other countries.

"We do not take into consideration either objections or support from other nations. It's the same with Australia when Indonesia protested against them recognising West Jerusalem (as Israel's capital)... They went ahead and recognised it," Mr Kalla said.

Mr Kalla also noted that if Bashir

dies in prison, it could create misunderstandings, but did not elaborate.

Australian PM Morrison yesterday asked Mr Joko to "show great respect to Australia" by making Bashir serve his full sentence.

"We have been consistent always... about our concerns about Abu Bakar Bashir and that he should serve what the Indonesian justice system has delivered to him as his sentence," he told News Corp Australia. "We have been very clear about the need to ensure that as part of our joint counter-terrorism efforts... that Abu Bakar Bashir would not be in any position or in any way able to influence or incite anything," said Mr Morrison.

Critics of the President claim the decision to release Bashir was politically motivated and connected to the presidential poll in April.

Mr Joko, who is running for his second and final term in office, has faced accusations of being anti-Islam and a communist, and Bashir's release is seen by some as a move to boost Mr Joko's Islamic credentials.

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## News analysis

### Indonesian leader's image hurt by decision to free radical cleric



Nur Asyiqin  
Mohamad Salleh

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In Jakarta

Radical Islamic cleric Abu Bakar Bashir's fate is up in the air, following President Joko Widodo's administration's vow on Monday to

review the decision to grant him an early release from his 15-year jail term.

But while the influential cleric's freedom is shrouded in uncertainty, one thing is for sure: For Mr Joko, who is running a tight race for re-election, the damage is done.

His announcement on Friday that Bashir – widely believed to be the architect behind Indonesia's deadliest bombings – would be freed early drew sharp criticism at home and abroad, and cast a pall on the President's image as a reformist and liberal.

While a possible U-turn, coming amid mounting pressure, could ease the sting, some observers say it may be too little, too late.

Jokowi, as he is popularly known, said his decision on Bashir, who is 80 years old and in poor health, was based on humanitarian grounds.

But, with Indonesia caught up in campaign fever ahead of the April 17 legislative and presidential elections, that justification has been dismissed as a mere excuse.

Despite his officials insisting that politics played no part in his decision, Mr Joko's move is still being seen as a political play: a clear sign that he remains hungry for the conservative Muslim vote – which has long been his Achilles heel – and that he is prepared to soften his stance for political gain.

He had ignored petitions for Bashir's release a year ago, when the cleric's health was already failing.

This time round, it was the government – not his client – that made the first move, said Bashir's lawyer Achmad Midhan yesterday.

Indonesia, the nation with the world's largest Muslim population, is seeing a worrying rise of headline Islamist groups who condemn pluralism and secularism.

And despite being a practising Muslim from Java, Mr Joko has been dogged by accusations of being not Muslim enough.

In the run-up to the April polls,

the President has sought to quash these doubts by burnishing his Muslim credentials.

Last year, Mr Joko – whose allies included former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, a Chinese-Christian who was jailed for blasphemy – shocked many when he picked cleric Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate.

Not only did Mr Ma'ruf seal Mr Basuki's fate when he characterised the former governor's reference to the Quran as blasphemous, he was also a key figure behind a 2005 Ulama Council of Indonesia fatwa condemning secularism, liberalism and pluralism – values Mr Joko has championed – as deviant.

When a group of Muslim clerics in conservative Aceh challenged the two presidential hopefuls to a Quran reading test, Mr Joko's team said he would be willing to take the test if people demanded it.

The campaign team of his opponent, retired army general Prabowo Subianto, had declared the test unnecessary.

The decision to grant Bashir early release looks to be the latest in a series of moves to court the Muslim vote.

These have drawn criticism that in Mr Joko's eagerness to court a group he is on shaky ground with,

he has compromised his own convictions.

But the announcement of Bashir's early release could end up his costliest compromise yet.

For one, it will have repercussions on security in a country with problems tamping down militant views.

Ms Sidney Jones, director of the Jakarta-based Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, said it will embolden those who see democracy as incompatible with Islam – one of Bashir's key beliefs.

She added in a scathing commentary: "It sends the message that if one defies the state long enough, it will eventually capitulate."

Bashir – widely regarded as the spiritual leader of terrorist group Jemaah Islamiah and mastermind of the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 – has been unrepentant about his radical views.

Then, there are the ramifications on Mr Joko's re-election bid.

Not only will the Bashir issue give his opponent fresh ammunition in the heated presidential race, as the roller-coaster saga unfolding in the past few days has shown, the early release decision has been a poorly thought-out move from which Mr Joko has no way out.

It makes the President look "weak, out-maneuvred and poorly advised", said Ms Jones, adding: "Not a good image as the election campaign heats up."

His administration now looks to be swiftly back-peddalling following a furious backlash that has drawn carefully chosen words from Prime Minister Scott Morrison of Australia, which lost 88 people in the Bali bombing.

But, even if the decision is reversed, it will not put things right. ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute fellow Norshahril Saat noted: "U-turning on the issue may lead to criticisms of indecisiveness, as well as lack of consultation with other leaders."

Mr Joko rode a wave of hope to the presidential office in 2014, winning hearts as a political outsider who spoke up for people-centric policies, pluralism and change – a fairy-tale ending that gave Indonesia its first president from outside the political, military and business elites.

The tightly-contested rematch will not be quite so picture-perfect.

With the Bashir saga, which is seen as a bid to woo new voters and prove he is not anti-Muslim, Mr Joko may have alienated a number of his old supporters.

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An operator monitors the minibuses (right) as they cruise along a route at a speed of up to 30kmh using GPS and magnetic road markers. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## Japan's Haneda airport tests driverless buses

TOKYO • Visitors pouring into Japan's Haneda airport for the Tokyo Olympics next year may find themselves ferried to and from planes on driverless buses, currently being tested at the major hub.

Six Japanese firms, including national carrier All Nippon Airways (ANA), jointly started a 10-day experiment with a self-driving prototype minibus last week. Yesterday, officials allowed a sneak peak at the automated transportation, which is being tested with a safety driver in the front seat. The "driver" sat with his white-gloved hands hovering above the wheel, ready to take control if need be, but otherwise allowing the bus to wend the route on its own.

"Our hope is to be able to offer users autonomous buses by the Tokyo 2020 Olympics," said ANA project chief Tadakatsu Yamaguchi.



The bus holds up to 10 people and cruises along a route connecting two terminals at a speed of up to 30kmh using Global Positioning System and magnetic markers on the road.

Project officials did not immediately

detail the cost of the system or how many people they expect to eventually use the buses.

Japan is hoping the 2020 Games will be a chance to showcase cutting-edge tech projects in the coun-

try, but autonomous transport is also an important sector for a nation suffering labour shortages and a shrinking, ageing population.

"The decline in the population puts us at risk of no longer being able

to carry out operations and that is why we are now pushing to introduce new autonomous mobility technologies so we can guarantee good operations with less staff," said Mr Yamaguchi. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



## Rescuers retrieve car that plunged off Penang Bridge

GEORGE TOWN • Malaysian rescuers yesterday retrieved the sports utility vehicle (SUV) that plunged into the sea from the Penang Bridge in a tragic accident on Sunday, with the body of its driver inside.

The badly-mangled car was hoisted using four cables attached to a crane yesterday evening. The operation took about 20 minutes.

The recovery team grew solemn upon seeing a lifeless body, believed to be that of 20-year-old college student Moey Yun Peng, inside the car.

The SUV had plunged into the sea after a collision with a black car in the early hours on Sunday around the 4km point of the bridge linking Penang island with the mainland part of the state.

Footage from a dashboard camera obtained by Bernama news agency showed a black Toyota Vios being driven on the mainland-bound side before colliding with a white Mazda CX-5 SUV, causing the SUV to swerve into the barricade and plunge off the 13.5km bridge.

The first attempt to lift the 1.5-tonne car, submerged at a depth of 15m, failed when the harness snapped. Divers then used a larger harness to bring the car up.

“We had to wait until the tide was at the lowest and the current slowed down, before we could



The recovery team used four cables attached to a crane to lift the Mazda CX-5 SUV, submerged at a depth of 15m, out of the water. The body of 20-year-old college student Moey Yun Peng was found in the driver's seat. The car had plunged into the sea after colliding with another vehicle at the 4km point of Penang Bridge in the early hours on Sunday. PHOTO: BERNAMA

safely dive in and strap the car,” said one of the recovery personnel on the bridge, who declined to be named.

Many curious onlookers gathered at the vicinity of the operation.

Police investigations revealed that the 21-year-old driver of the Toyota Vios tested positive for cannabis.

Tests are still being carried out to determine if the driver was also

drunk at the time of the incident.

Police investigations revealed that both drivers had been childhood friends “but they were not close”, said Mr Moey’s sister-in-law.

The two drivers had earlier attended a friend’s birthday party at a club in Chulia Street in George Town.

It was a heart-wrenching scene on Monday at the marine police

base in Batu Uban, where Mr Moey’s family members had gathered.

A woman, believed to be his mother, was heard crying aloud: “When are you coming home?” THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

## US-N. Korea nuclear talks advancing well, says S. Korea official

**Compromise may have been reached on lifting sanctions, giving up N-facilities**

**Chang May Choon**  
South Korea Correspondent  
In Seoul

Nuclear talks between the United States and North Korea are progressing well, and both sides may have reached a compromise in which US sanctions could be lifted in return for the North giving up nuclear facilities and materials, according to a South Korean official.

If so, Pyongyang would want to resume two key inter-Korea projects – the Kaesong industrial complex and Mount Kumgang resort, said governor Choi Moon-soon of eastern Gangwon province.

“There may appear to be a stalemate situation in nuclear talks but the actual mood at the negotiating table is quite good,” he told a foreign media briefing in Seoul yesterday. “The gap between the two sides has narrowed significantly since Stephen Biegun got involved,” he said, referring to the US Special Representative for North Korea.

Since he was appointed last August, Mr Biegun, who worked in national security under the George W. Bush administration, has visited Seoul three times to discuss North Korea’s denuclearisation



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo flanked by US Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun and North Korean Vice-Chairman Kim Yong Chol before a meeting in Washington, DC, last Friday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

with South Korean officials. He met his North Korean counterpart, Vice-Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui, over the weekend for the first time at a conference organised by Sweden and held in the outskirts of Stockholm. It ended on Monday.

The Swedish Foreign Ministry said the talks, which also involved South Korea’s top nuclear envoy Lee Do-hoon, were “constructive” and covered issues including confidence-building, economic development and long-term engagement.

The meeting, which came after North Korean official Kim Yong Chol met US President Donald Trump and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Washington, aims to pave the way for a second summit between Mr Trump and North

Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

The two leaders are due to meet late next month, eight months after they first agreed in Singapore to work towards the “complete denuclearisation” of the Korean Peninsula. Vietnam has expressed interest to host the upcoming summit.

In Seoul, Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha has voiced hope that the second Trump-Kim summit will produce concrete agreements.

“The first summit was historic in itself, and the outcome of it was a very broad framework of shared goals,” she told Yonhap news agency in a video interview released yesterday. “The second summit has now to produce concrete agreement towards those goalposts.”

Dr Kang also dismissed talk that

Washington will compromise on its denuclearisation goals.

The US has maintained pressure and sanctions on the North, insisting that it give up nuclear weapons before concessions can be given.

But Pyongyang is pushing for corresponding measures such as the easing of some sanctions or a declaration to formally end the 1950-53 Korean War, which was halted only by an armistice.

The North has also asked for a complete stop to joint military drills between US and South Korea. It was revealed yesterday that the two allies failed to agree on a new defence cost-sharing deal, despite 10 rounds of negotiations. Washington wants Seoul to pay 1.4 trillion won (\$1.7 billion) – up from 960 billion won last year – to maintain 28,500 US troops in South Korea, but Seoul is only prepared to fork out 1 trillion won.

“There’s no shifting – not a bit – about what the goal is. It’s complete denuclearisation,” Dr Kang said. She also noted that the North Korean leader “knows clearly” that he cannot deliver economic development while under international sanctions, and that “he needs to deliver on the denuclearisation track” for sanctions to be lifted.

Mr Choi, whose province hosted last year’s Pyeongchang Winter Olympics that drew North Korean participation and opened up a new era of inter-Korea collaboration and reconciliation, expressed confidence that the North will “become a successful case of denuclearisation in the world”.

He added that sports exchanges will continue, as the two Koreas work towards making a joint bid to host the 2032 summer Olympics.

Both sides will also conduct joint marathon training in China’s Kunming city to prepare for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and also train together for women’s ice hockey and bobsleigh in Pyeongchang for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

“Sports is an area where United Nations sanctions do not apply, so exchanges in sports will be the most active,” he added.

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## Undeclared N. Korea missile headquarters discovered: Report

WASHINGTON • One of 20 undeclared ballistic missile operating bases in North Korea serves as a missile headquarters, according to a report published on Monday by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

“The Sino-ri missile operating base and the Nodong missiles deployed at this location fit into North Korea’s presumed nuclear military strategy by providing an operational-level nuclear or conventional first strike capability,” said the report co-authored by analyst Victor Cha.

The discovery of an undeclared missile headquarters comes three days after US President Donald Trump said he “looks forward” to a second summit to discuss denuclearisation with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in late February.

Mr Kim vowed to work towards denuclearisation at his first summit with Mr Trump on June 12 in Singapore last year, but there has been little concrete progress since.

CSIS, which last reported on the 20 missile bases in November, said the Sino-ri base has never been declared by North Korea and as a result, “does not appear to be the subject of denuclearisation negotiations”.

The report said that missile operating bases would presumably be subject to declaration, verification, and dismantlement in any nuclear deal.

“The North Koreans are not going to negotiate over things they don’t disclose,” said Dr Cha.

“It looks like they’re playing a game. They’re still going to have all this operational capability”, even if they destroy their disclosed nuclear sites, he noted.

Located 212km north of the de-

militarised zone, the Sino-ri complex is an 18-sq-km base that plays a key role in developing ballistic missiles capable of reaching South Korea, Japan, and even the US territory of Guam in the Western Pacific, the report said.

It houses a regiment-sized unit equipped with Nodong-1 medium-range ballistic missiles, the report added. Satellite images of the base from Dec 27 last year show an entrance to an underground bunker, reinforced shelters and a headquarters.

In South Korea, the Sino-ri facility has long been known as one of the bases housing the Nodong, also called the Rodong, a medium-range missile based on Soviet-era Scud technology that the North began deploying in the mid-1990s.

“It is a facility we’ve been monitoring with interest, in cooperation with the United States,” Mr Kim Joon-rak, a spokesman for South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a news briefing yesterday. REUTERS

**Satellite images of the base from Dec 27 last year show an entrance to an underground bunker, reinforced shelters and a headquarters, according to the report published by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies.**

## Window falls from HK hotel, killing tourist below

HONG KONG • Windows fell off from buildings in two incidents in Hong Kong on Monday, with one of them killing a Chinese tourist on a street in the popular Tsim Sha Tsui shopping district.

The 24-year-old tourist was shopping with her boyfriend when a window measuring 44cm by 130cm came crashing down from the 16th floor of the Mira Hong Kong hotel in Nathan Road and hit her on the head, Ming Pao reported.

She was taken to a hospital unconsciousness and later pronounced dead.

Her 36-year-old boyfriend suffered minor injuries on his left shoulder and was discharged from hospital after treatment.

Police arrested a Nepalese cleaner, 39, who they said used a key to unlock the window in a guestroom and pushed it outwards to open it before the aluminium window frame came off. Reports citing

sources alleged that the cleaner had opened the window to dispel the stench of cigarette smoke in the room, although smoking is prohibited in the guestrooms.

Senior Inspector Chan Ka Ying from the Yau Tsim district crime squad said officers would check with the hotel to determine whether cleaning procedures required windows to be opened, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) reported. “We will look into other

aspects such as the liability of parties like the hotel and its management,” she said.

The Hong Kong Free Press reported that the cleaner was arrested under section 4B of the Summary Offences Ordinance, on suspicion of allowing an object to fall from a building to the danger or injury of any person in or near a public place. The offence carries a fine of HK\$10,000 (\$1,735) and jail term of six months.

The tourist, who has not been named by the police, was not a guest at the hotel and had just arrived in the city from Foshan in southern China’s Guangdong province on the same day. It is believed that the screws and rivets on the window had corroded, which led to the incident.

The Mira, owned by Miramar Group Hong Kong, offered its condolences and said it was helping police with investigations.

“We will make every effort to assist (the victim’s) family,” the hotel said in a statement.

The Mira Hotel made headlines in 2013 after it was chosen by whistleblower Edward Snowden as his bolt-hole in Hong Kong after he fled the United States, reported Agence France-Presse.

SCMP reported that The Mira replaced its windows when it underwent a major renovation in 2009.

In a separate incident, a 50cm by 100cm window fell from a public housing flat in Tai Po in the New Territories around two hours after the Tsim Sha Tsui tragedy. No one was injured in the second incident.



# Roma, The Favourite lead Oscar race with 10 nominations each

LOS ANGELES • Alfonso Cuarón's Roma, an ode to his childhood in 1970s Mexico City, and offbeat royal romp The Favourite yesterday topped the Oscar nominations with 10 each.

Popular musical romance A Star Is Born and former US vice-president Dick Cheney biopic Vice finished with eight nominations each, while superhero blockbuster Black Panther finished with seven.

So far, the awards season has been a bit surprising, with prizes sprayed among a variety of films.

So yesterday's announcement gave the race to the Academy Awards on Feb 24 a bit more clarity.

The sweeping success of Roma is history-making for streaming giant Netflix, marking its first nomination for best picture, and also first in other top categories like best director and best actress.

But The Favourite scored a bit of a surprise with its stellar haul.

While nominations for its trio of stars – Olivia Colman, Emma Stone and Rachel Weisz – were a near-lock, its flight to the top of the list was not. Director Yorgos Lanthimos took a nod, instead of Bradley Cooper for A Star Is Born, which scored in most big categories.

It had nominations for three of the four acting prizes – Cooper,

Lady Gaga and their co-star Sam Elliott. Surprisingly, Cooper was denied a nod for his directing debut, despite earning nominations at the Golden Globes and from the Directors Guild.

In all, there are eight films vying for best picture: Roma, The Favourite, A Star Is Born, Spike Lee's BlacKkKlansman, Queen biopic Bohemian Rhapsody, Vice, civil rights dramedy Green Book and Black Panther.

Black Panther also made history as the first superhero flick ever nominated in the category.

Green Book earned five Oscar nominations and moved up in the



Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper (above) in A Star Is Born, Olivia Colman (top right) of The Favourite and Rami Malek of Bohemian Rhapsody got acting nods. PHOTO: WARNER BROS

Academy Awards conversation over the weekend, when it won best film at the Producers Guild of America (PGA) awards.

Twenty times out of 29, the PGA award winner has gone on to take the best picture Oscar.

In the best actor category, Christian Bale looks to be the front runner for his uncanny portrayal of Mr Cheney in Vice.

But Rami Malek's Golden Globe win for his work as Freddie Mercury in Bohemian Rhapsody put

# Sharing Singapore's smart-city experience

## Republic keen to share with Arctic nations how it used tech to meet challenges: Sam Tan

**Audrey Tan**  
Environment Correspondent  
In Tromsø (Norway)

Singapore is a small country with no natural resources, but it has successfully harnessed technology, including sensors and automated meters, to help it fulfil its ambitions of becoming a smart city.

This is an experience it hopes to share with other nations looking to technology for solutions to challenges such as climate change, Min-

ister of State for Foreign Affairs Sam Tan said on Monday.

Speaking to a crowd of policymakers and academics at the Arctic Frontiers conference in Tromsø, Norway, he said the theme of this year's event, Smart Arctic, was a timely one, with new technologies bringing about opportunities and disruptions.

For example, Singapore is investing in revamping its power grid to become more energy-efficient and deploying sensors that can collect real-time data on wind, sunlight

and shade in residential areas.

By analysing this information, urban planners will be able to get more insight into how to design and site future housing estates to reduce the need for air-conditioning.

"This will in turn reduce our carbon emissions," said Mr Tan.

The use of technology to strike a balance between development and the protection of the Arctic environment looks set to be a major theme during the five-day conference, which kicked off on Sunday.

On Monday, Norway's Minister of Climate and Environment Ola Elvestuen cited a recent scientific report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as being

an urgent call for countries to transition to a low carbon future.

The report highlighted the differences in impacts of a 1.5 deg C global warming scenario versus a 2 deg C one, with the latter resulting in catastrophic impacts on earth systems, human livelihoods and biodiversity.

"We must be smarter and more efficient at using energy. We need smart cities and communities, and... strong policies to speed up transitions to a low emission society," he said.

Some of Singapore's home-grown innovations could help.

Local start-up Third Wave Power, for example, has designed a portable solar charger that can be

used by off-grid rural communities.

"This is useful for people living in remote areas, not just in South-east Asia, but also in the Arctic region," said Mr Tan.

Ms Hema Nadarajah, a Singaporean doctoral candidate studying international relations at the University of British Columbia's department of political science, said both the Arctic and South-east Asia have many remote communities that experience extreme weather conditions and share common issues related to ageing energy infrastructure.

She said: "With similar challenges, solutions can be translated and adapted to the local context."

Mr Tan also highlighted the im-

portance of context during the event, acknowledging that solutions from Singapore cannot be directly applied to the Arctic region due to the differences between both regions.

"But I hope this will provide examples and options to think about while you are planning for a smarter Arctic. As an observer, we would like to share our information and experience with our Arctic counterparts" he said, referring to how Singapore was granted observer status at the Arctic Council in 2013.

He added: "Together, we can make the Arctic cool again."

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Rohingya being interrogated at a police station in the city of Karimganj in Assam, India, yesterday. India's Hindu nationalist government regards the Rohingya as illegal aliens and a security risk. It has ordered that tens of thousands of them living in scattered settlements and slums around the country be identified and repatriated. PHOTOS: EPA-EFE

# India arrests 31 Rohingya stranded at Bangladesh border

NEW DELHI • Indian police yesterday arrested 31 Rohingya Muslims stranded on the border after they were denied entry into Bangladesh and border officials failed to agree on what to do with members of the community fleeing a crackdown in India.

India's Hindu nationalist government regards the Rohingya as illegal aliens and a security risk. It has ordered that tens of thousands of them living in scattered settlements and slums around the country be identified and repatriated.

The stranded Rohingya, including women and children, had been stuck in no-man's land on Bangladesh's border with India since last Friday. Two rounds of talks between border officials

failed to find a solution.

"We have arrested them under the Foreigners Act on charges of entering India without valid travel documents," said sub-divisional police officer Ajay Kumar Das, a police official in the north-east state of Tripura that borders Bangladesh.

Hundreds of thousands of members of mostly Buddhist Myanmar's Rohingya community have left their homes in Myanmar's Rakhine State over the decades, most fleeing military crackdowns and discrimination.

Many have sought shelter in Bangladesh – where nearly one million live – but others have ended up in India, South-east Asia and beyond.

The 31 had been living in Kashmir

and some of them carried identity cards issued by the United Nations refugee agency, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The UNHCR has issued identity cards to about 16,500 Rohingya in India that it says can help "prevent harassment, arbitrary arrests, detention and deportation".

India does not recognise the cards. Its deportation of seven Rohingya men to Myanmar in October raised fears in the community of a wider crackdown and prompted hundreds of Rohingya families to leave India for Bangladesh.

Indian police arrested another group of 30 Rohingya on Monday in the north-eastern state of Assam, where they had moved after living for six years in Jammu and



A Rohingya man showing his identity card issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. India does not recognise the cards.

Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state.

Members of the group said they were looking for work after losing their jobs in Kashmir, police said.

"The arrests were made during a

routine check by police and, after interrogation, we found they are all from Myanmar," said police official Imon Saikia in the city of Karimganj, where the group was arrested.

REUTERS

# China pledges \$800m in aid to Cambodia

PHNOM PENH • China has pledged four billion yuan (\$580 million) in aid to Cambodia from this year to 2021, Prime Minister Hun Sen said yesterday, highlighting strong ties between Beijing and Phnom Penh amid a European Union threat of trade sanctions.

Mr Hun Sen is on a three-day visit to China, his most important regional ally, and held bilateral talks with President Xi Jinping in Beijing in which he asked for more aid and investment in his country's crucial textile industry.

Mr Xi pledged the grant in response, Mr Hun Sen's official Facebook post said. The Chinese leader also promised to import 400,000 tonnes of rice from Cambodia, vowed to push bilateral trade to US\$10 billion (\$13.6 billion) by 2023 and encouraged more Chinese investment, the post said.

China's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Mr Xi told Mr Hun Sen that China wanted to strengthen political, economic and security cooperation with Cambodia and increase China-Cambodia coordination at the United Nations and within Asean.

The two sides should hasten links between China's Belt and Road plan and Cambodia's development strategy, Mr Xi said.

The statement made no mention of the financial aid.

China has already poured billions of dollars in development assistance and loans into Cambodia through Mr Xi's Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to bolster land and sea links with South-east Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

Some Western governments have accused China of pulling countries into a debt trap with the initiative, an accusation Beijing has denied.

Mr Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party won all seats in a general election in July last year after the Supreme Court dissolved the main opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party in 2017 at the government's request.

The EU condemned the election as not credible and threatened to strip Cambodia of its Everything but Arms status because of the crackdown on the opposition, media and civil society groups before the election.

REUTERS



# PM May under fresh pressure over Brexit process

She faces House rebellion, Cabinet split after failing to persuade legislators of a viable plan

**Jonathan Eyal**  
Global Affairs Correspondent  
In London

British Prime Minister Theresa May faces a mass rebellion in Parliament and a split in her own Cabinet after she failed to persuade legislators that she has a viable plan for Britain's orderly withdrawal from the European Union.

With only two months remaining before Britain ceases to be a member of the EU, regardless of whether it succeeds in concluding a deal governing its future trade and political relations with the rest of Europe, both government and opposition MPs in London are sidelining the Prime Minister by tabling various Bills which would either delay Brexit – as the process of Britain's withdrawal from the EU is popularly known – or call for a new national referendum on the topic.

Meanwhile, Mrs May has been warned by a number of senior ministers in her Cabinet that they will resign as early as next week unless she asks other EU governments to extend the Brexit talks.

Mrs May spent more than 18 months negotiating in secrecy a Brexit deal which proposes to free Britain from the need to grant EU citizens the right to work and live in the country, terminates the application of EU law, and allows the British to regain control of trade relations.

But the EU drove a hard bargain. Britain had to guarantee permanent residence rights to the estimated 3.5 million EU citizens living in the country, as well as accept that its future trade links with Europe will be decided in negotiations that have yet to begin.

London is also liable for a £39 billion (\$69 billion) "divorce" bill. More controversially, Mrs May's

deal gives Ireland the right to veto any future EU trade arrangement unless the British grant a special status to Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom; the Irish are determined that the frontier between them and Northern Ireland should be kept open.

The deal merely succeeded in infuriating everyone. Brexit-supporting legislators hate the Irish veto, which they fear could be used to keep Britain permanently in the EU, while legislators who are against Brexit do not like the nebulous nature of the arrangement.

Last week, MPs rejected Mrs May's deal by 432 votes to 202, with a majority of 230. No other British government has ever been defeated by such a margin.

Mrs May promised to come back with a "Plan B", a new arrangement that could get parliamentary support. Instead, she tabled on Monday the same deal that was rejected, coupled with a promise to get some concessions from the EU over Ireland's right to veto a future deal.

The Prime Minister's strategy is to run the clock down to March 29, the day when under current arrangements Britain is scheduled to cease being an EU member regardless of whether a negotiated arrangement is in place.

Her hope is that, as that fateful day approaches, either EU negotiators will blink, or her MPs will fall into line.

Neither appears to be happening, however.

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier has already scotched any idea of reopening the existing deal.

The EU, he said, is willing to consider a "more ambitious" future relationship with Britain, if Mrs May is prepared to soften her insistence on cutting off all obligations to the EU.

But if the British government maintains its present hardline stance, Mr Barnier warned, there will be no renegotiations; the current deal remains Europe's "best possible" offer.

Meanwhile, MPs are vying with one another in introducing legislation restricting Mrs May's room for manoeuvre.

One proposal put forward by Labour, the main opposition party, is to give MPs the right to call for a further national referendum, to see whether the public still supports separation from the EU, or wants another deal.

That, says Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, is the only way "to end this Brexit deadlock".

Meanwhile, MPs from across all parties are planning to vote on another amendment that would remove the option of Britain leaving without a deal.

Mrs May rejects the option of another referendum as "threatening Britain's social cohesion" and refuses to rule out the possibility that the country would leave with no deal.

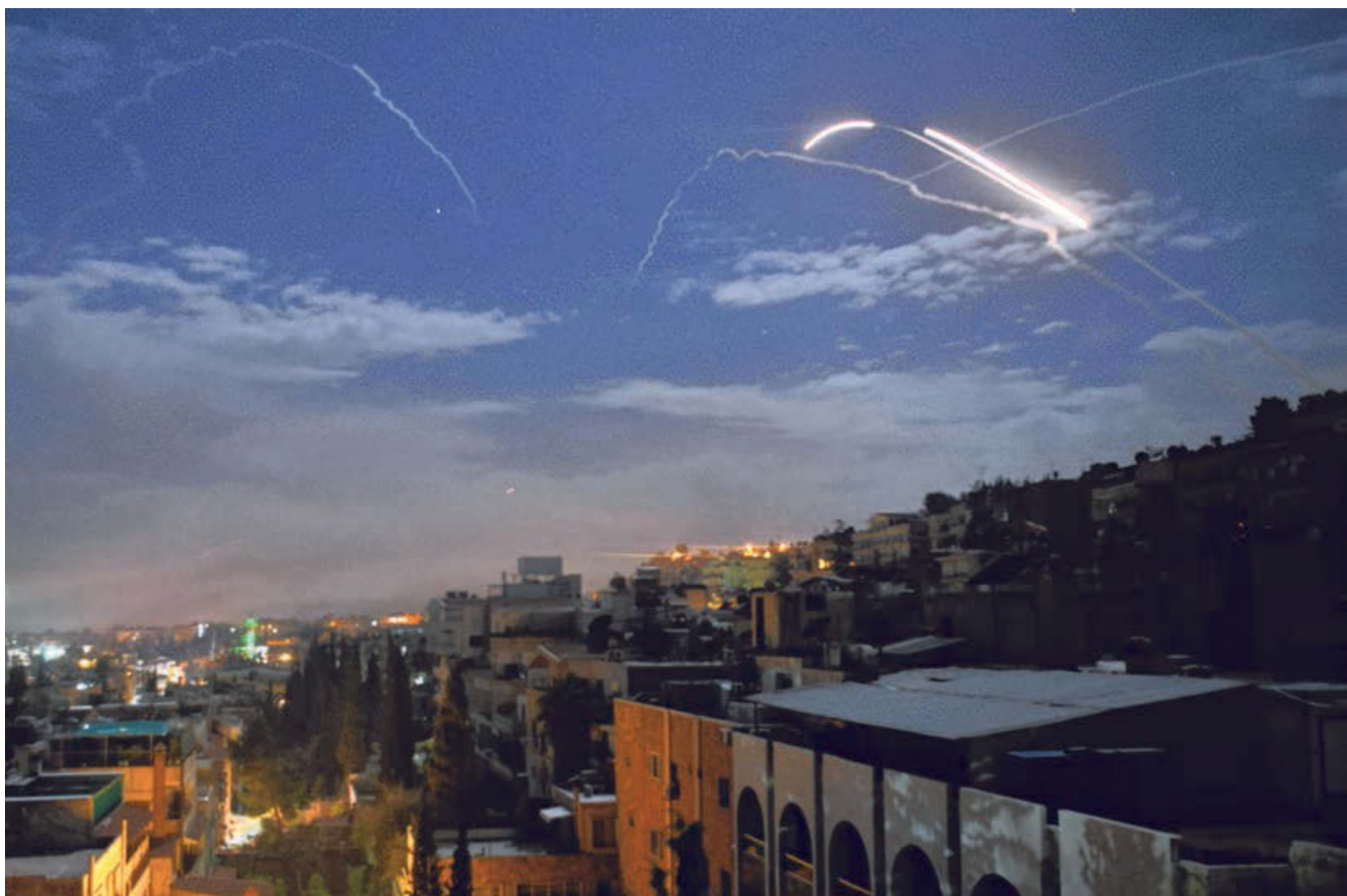
But the Prime Minister's hand may be forced by a rebellion within her Cabinet, where up to 40 top and junior ministers are threatening to resign unless she asks the EU for a postponement of the negotiations' deadline and rules out a no-deal departure.

Matters will become clearer only early next week, when the various competing camps of MPs test their strengths in repeated parliamentary votes.

But it is already obvious Britain is in no shape to leave the EU on the planned date. And Mrs May is no longer in effective control of the political agenda in London.

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SEE EDITORIAL A19



Syrian air defence batteries responding to what the state media said were Israeli missiles targeting Damascus on Monday. Israel struck what it said were Iranian targets in Syria in response to rocket fire it blamed on Iran, sparking concerns of an escalation. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## News analysis

# Fight's on for Syria's post-war order



**Gil Yaron**

For The Straits Times  
In Tel Aviv

Israel flew numerous sorties against Iranian targets in Syria in a massive bombing early on Monday that heralded a new phase in an ongoing campaign.

Israeli ministers are talking about an "open war with Iran", the outcome of which could determine the future of the entire Middle East.

It was a move that has long been part of the routine of Middle Eastern politics: Israel bombed dozens of Iranian targets in Syria.

It would hardly be worth mentioning, since the Israeli Air Force has flown hundreds of similar missions.

But the circumstances of this operation were special.

First, there was the scope of the Israeli attacks. Syrian and Israeli sources unanimously described the bombings as the "heaviest" since the Israeli air campaign began three years ago in its neighbouring country.

Second, Israel openly acknowledged the attacks. In the past, it usually kept silent about its activities.

Third, Syria and Iran tried to retaliate by shooting a ground-to-ground missile at civilian targets in Israel hours after an attack on Sunday morning.

Till now, Israeli attacks had remained unanswered, except for one incident about a year ago.

So it is hardly surprising that Israel's Intelligence Minister Israel Katz thinks his country has entered a new phase of fighting in Syria.

While the army has in the past used de-escalating language – describing its attacks as a "campaign between the wars" in which Israel tried to prevent Iran from gaining a military foothold in its northern border – Mr Katz now stated that "an open confrontation



A handout photo from the Israel Defence Forces showing Iranian targets being attacked by the Israeli military in Syria on Monday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

with Iran has begun".

That confrontation could determine the post-civil war order in Syria's skies.

Because of the country's strategic importance, this could decide the balance of power throughout the entire Middle East.

Israel has given up its strategy of secrecy for several reasons.

Some commentators and the opposition contend the change was motivated by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's political interests – he wants to shore up his standing with his right-wing constituents ahead of elections on April 9. But this seems unlikely.

In the security apparatus, hardly anyone seems to follow this line of thought.

Here, most said that strategic changes had necessitated an Israeli change of course.

After eight years, Syria's President Bashar al-Assad and his patrons Russia and Iran are emerging as the winners of the bloody civil war.

Teheran wants to benefit strategically from its immense investment.

It aspires to control a land corridor to the Mediterranean and regional hegemony, and also to prevent an American attack or fend it off more easily.

At the same time, Iran is seeking a strong military presence in Syria.

This presence could help threaten its arch-enemy Israel directly from its frontier, significantly increasing the price it exacts should Israel

decide to launch pre-emptive actions against Teheran's nuclear programme.

The complete withdrawal of United States troops from Syria, which US President Donald Trump surprisingly announced a few weeks ago, probably encouraged Teheran to intensify its efforts in this regard.

The presence of the GIs was a guarantee that Russia and Iran would not ignore Israel's interests in Syria. Now, Jerusalem finds itself all alone on its northern front.

"Israel had to demonstrate determination," former army general Yaakov Amidror told The Straits Times.

"Jerusalem had a choice of escalating its pressure in two ways – intensify either its attacks or its rhetoric. In the first phase, therefore, it escalated its rhetoric."

Mr Netanyahu told the Israeli media last week: "The accumulation of recent attacks proves that we are more determined than ever to take action against Iran in Syria." He advised the Iranians: "Leave Syria quickly, we will not stop attacking you."

Concurrently, chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot admitted in a farewell interview to the New York Times for the first time that Israel had "destroyed thousands of Iranian targets" in Syria. Israel was clearly signalling that despite the US withdrawal, it does not shy away from any confrontation with Iran or disagreements with Russia.

But the Iranians were unimpressed. Israel's bombing

allegedly destroyed 30 per cent of Iranian facilities in Syria.

However, now that Mr Assad's victory seems certain, and given the dwindling role of the US, Teheran is no longer willing to tolerate Israel hampering its efforts.

Therefore, it wants to set new rules in Syria's skies.

On Sunday afternoon, Iran retaliated against an Israeli bombing that morning and launched a ground-to-ground missile at the Golan Heights, where thousands of citizens were skiing at the time.

The missile was intercepted by the Israeli air defences. This action was preceded by "months of preparations", Israel's military contended, claiming Iranian forces had fired an Iranian-built missile on the orders of the Iranian leadership.

Of concern to Israel was the fact that the launch site was said to have been a few dozen kilometres from the border – in a zone where no Iranian troops were supposed to be, according to an agreement between Israel and Russia.

In the face of this development, Israel's government could no longer make do with verbal escalation, and ordered its massive air strike. "Now the ball is in Iran's court," says Mr Amidror.

But Teheran does not seem to accept Israel's red lines.

Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander Mohammad Ali Jafari described Mr Netanyahu's warnings as "ridiculous".

Israel should "fear the day when it is hit by precise Iranian missiles to take revenge for all the blood of the oppressed Muslims it shed".

Brigadier-General Aziz Nasirzadeh, commander of the Iranian Air Force, said: "Our young men can hardly wait to confront and wipe out the Zionist regime."

For Israel, as for Iran, the control of Syria's airspace has become a mutually exclusive, key national interest that determines its regional clout and affects its national security. As long as this does not change, military developments are likely to follow the path of the escalating rhetoric.

A conflagration in Syria, even the war that Minister Katz conjured, seems ever harder to avoid.

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**EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier (above) has already scotched any idea of reopening the existing deal. The EU, he said, is willing to consider a "more ambitious" future relationship with Britain, if Prime Minister Theresa May is prepared to soften her insistence on cutting off all obligations to the EU. But if the British government maintains its present hardline stance, Mr Barnier warned, there will be no renegotiations.**

# EVA flight attendants traumatised by having to wipe passenger's bum

TAIPEI • Several female flight attendants have been left traumatised after they were allegedly coerced by a male passenger to help him remove his underwear and wipe his backside after he took a dump.

The incident purportedly occurred on a long-haul flight from Los Angeles to Taiwan on Taiwanese airline EVA Air on Saturday, and made headlines after the stewardesses went to the media with their ordeal.

One of the flight attendants, known by her family name, Kuo, held a press conference on Monday, accompanied by members of Taoyuan Flight Attendants Union, Taiwan media reported.

According to Ms Kuo's recounting of the incident, the passenger, who was obese and wheelchair-bound, informed them that he required assistance going to the toilet as he had injured his right arm.

Not long after they helped him into the toilet, the man demanded that they help him remove his underwear, which was already pulled down halfway.

Despite their attempts to turn down his excessive request, he refused to take no for an answer. The crew gave in to his request.

The passenger called them in again after he had finished relieving himself, and demanded that they wipe his backside.

The all-female crew felt they had no choice but to comply.

The man then reportedly made suggestive sounds when he was being cleaned.

The male passenger is said to be a Caucasian who had flown with the airline 20 times.

Flight attendant Lee Ying said the man had made similar demands of EVA's crew on previous flights but was turned down.

He simply defecated on his seat, Ms Lee said, to the shock and disgust of other passengers.

She criticised EVA for blaming the crew over the earlier incidents.

In response to the complaints, EVA Air said in a statement yesterday that crew members are not obliged to comply with passengers' requests that they deem inappropriate.

The company said it would conduct an investigation into the incident and "appropriate measures", such as banning him from future flights, would be taken against the passenger if he was found to have overstepped boundaries.

Meanwhile the unfortunate stewardess who did the dirty job has had to undergo psychiatric treatment for her ordeal, Taiwan media reported.

She has been given three weeks' medical leave.



French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel sharing a hug yesterday at the town hall of Aachen, where they signed the Treaty of Aachen. The agreement signals that Berlin and Paris will combat efforts by some nationalist politicians in Europe to erode the embattled 28-nation EU. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



# France, Germany to ‘show the way forward’ for EU

## Leaders of the two countries sign new treaty for closer ties and boost European unity

AACHEN (Germany) • The leaders of France and Germany have signed a new treaty to update their 1963 post-war reconciliation accord, aiming to reinvigorate the European Union’s main axis as growing euro-sceptic nationalism tests the bloc’s cohesion.

At a warm ceremony in the German border city of Aachen yesterday, a historical symbol of European concord, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron sought to show they are ready to give fresh leadership to the troubled EU project.

The leaders want the 16-page Aachen Treaty, negotiated over the past year to update the 1963 Elysee Treaty of post-war reconciliation, to give an impulse to European unity that has been strained by Brexit, immigration and the euro zone crisis.

“We are doing this because we live in special times and because in these times, we need resolute, distinct, clear, forward-looking answers,” said Dr Merkel, noting Aachen was home to Charlemagne, whom she dubbed “the father of Europe”.

Mr Macron said: “At a time when Europe is threatened by nationalism, which is growing from within, when Europe is shaken by the pains of Brexit and worried by global changes that go far beyond the national level... Germany and France must assume their responsibility and show the way forward.”

Short on detail, the treaty extension commits to closer foreign and defence policy ties, but does little to push forward euro zone economic reform.

Dr Sabine von Oppeln, expert on Franco-German ties at Berlin’s Free University, said of the slow

progress on euro zone reform: “This could be an opportunity for a real renewal of cooperation, but I fear the chance has been lost.”

Franco-German treaties are supposed to be milestones in the process of European integration, paving the way for the bloc as a whole to deepen cooperation.

“Today, Europe needs a revival of faith in the meaning of solidarity and unity, and I want to believe that enhanced Franco-German cooperation will serve this objective,” said European Council chief Donald Tusk, who attended the ceremony with European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker.

However, Dr Merkel and Mr Macron, both of whom have struggled to maintain their authority over their own domestic politics, have failed this time to produce the wide-ranging vision to really enthruse europhiles.

The Aachen document stipulates that it will be a priority of German-French diplomacy for Germany to be accepted as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

The agreement also signals that Berlin and Paris will combat efforts by some nationalist politicians in Europe to erode the 28-nation EU.

Facing new challenges from US President Donald Trump as well as EU governments in Italy, Poland and Hungary, Dr Merkel and Mr Macron are keen to head off any breakthrough for euro-sceptic parties in a European Parliament vote in May.

Euro-sceptics have voiced their opposition. Mr Alexander Gauland, leader in Parliament of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), said: “The EU is now deeply divided. A German-French special relationship will alienate us even further from the other Europeans.”

The original Elysee Treaty was signed in 1963 by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and President Charles de Gaulle who, in the same year, vetoed the British application to join the European Community, the precursor of today’s European Union. REUTERS

# ILO calls for work in the future to be human-centred

Tan Hui Yee  
Indochina Bureau Chief  
In Geneva

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has urged that work in the future be human-centred as it launched an ambitious agenda to refocus discussion about work, which is being rapidly transformed by technological and economic change.

Among the recommendations by the United Nations body is a “universal labour guarantee” to help protect workers’ safety and well-being regardless of contractual arrangements or employment status, as well as to ensure that artificial intelligence tools being created still allow people – not machines – to make the final decisions.

“In the 20th century, we established that labour is not a commodity. In the 21st century, we must also ensure that labour is not a robot,” said South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who co-chairs an ILO-appointed global commission that came up with the recommendations on the future of work. These were presented in Geneva yesterday morning.

ILO director-general Guy Ryder, speaking to the media alongside Mr Ramaphosa, stressed: “The number of jobs, the future of employment is not going to be determined alone by the autonomous forward march of technology... It depends on the choices to be made by policymakers and it is perfectly possible, with the application of exactly the same technologies, to create what we would regard as very positive employment-rich solutions.”

The commission’s report called for “committed action on the part of governments as well as employers’ and workers’ organisations”.

“They need to reinvigorate the social contract that gives working people a just share of economic progress, respect for their rights and protection against risk in return for their continuing contribution to the economy,” it said.

Recent studies of high-income economies found that wage growth has not kept pace with productivity growth. Meanwhile, large technological companies are often able to dominate their respective markets by gathering and using massive amounts of digital data.

The commission noted both the potential and the danger of these

swift technology changes: While applications and sensors can make it easier for companies to monitor the working conditions down their supply chains, new technologies also generate large amounts of data on workers that can be misused.

“Algorithms used for job matching may reproduce historical biases and prejudices, for example,” it said, as it also urged governments to develop regulations that would require firms to be accountable for the way they use data and algorithms.

“Workers should be informed of any monitoring done at the workplace and limits should be imposed on the collection of data that might prompt discrimination, such as on union membership,” it said. “Workers should have access to their own data, as well as the right to hand that information to their representative or regulatory authority.”

Meanwhile, the universal labour guarantee being promoted by the ILO specifies workers’ rights to unionise, working conditions, as well as an adequate living wage.

This guarantee should be complemented by a system of entitlements to training so that all workers can take paid time off to learn new skills.

The panel suggested that employment insurance could be reconfigured, or “social funds” created, so that self-employed workers or those working in small firms who are less likely to receive training from employers will also benefit.

Some industries meet important global needs and present compelling opportunities to create decent and sustainable work, the report noted.

Ageing populations, for example, have increased the need for care services, creating an industry that could create more than 475 million jobs around the world by 2030. To get there, governments should invest in quality care services and support unpaid care workers who wish to return to paid employment, it said.

Developing a formal care economy also opens the way for gender equality, allowing countries to harness the full potential of their female workforces.

Meanwhile, the ILO also called for a rethink of business incentives, to allow company executives to think beyond their usual bottom lines.

Recent studies have highlighted the worrying trend of firms channeling investments through offshore tax havens, for example.

## Worrying trends



### Employment

344 million jobs need to be created by 2030, in addition to the 190 million jobs needed to address unemployment today.



### Working poverty

300 million workers live in extreme poverty (<US\$1.90 a day).



### Unemployment

190 million people are unemployed, of whom 64.8 million are youth.



### Digital divide

Only 53.6% of all households have Internet access. In emerging countries, the share is only 15%.



### Working time

36.1% of global workforce work excessive hours (more than 48 hours a week).



### Gender pay gap

Women are paid around 20% less than men.



### Fatal work-related injuries and illnesses

2.78 million people die every year as a result of occupational accidents or work-related illnesses.



### Informal employment

2 billion people make their living in the informal economy.



### Wages

Wage growth declined from 2.4% to 1.8% between 2016 and 2017.



### Inequality

Between 1980 and 2016, the richest 1% of the world’s population received 27% of global income growth whereas the poorest 50% received only 12%.

Source: WORK FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE – GLOBAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF WORK STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

shore tax havens, for example.

An International Monetary Fund article last year highlighted how US\$12 trillion (S\$16 trillion) – almost 40 per cent of all foreign direct investment positions globally – is “completely artificial”, consisting of financial investments passing through “empty corporate shells with no real activity”.

This practice creates more opportunities for tax avoidance or evasion, it said.

Addressing this, the ILO called

for the reshaping of the current business climate to nudge firms to prioritise the welfare of workers and their larger communities.

Some possible measures include creating advisory stakeholder councils or even ending the requirement for quarterly financial reporting. Another idea is to create incentives for shareholders to stay invested in a company for the long term.

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# Most Americans support high-skilled immigration: Study

Charissa Yong  
US Correspondent  
In Washington

Despite the recent prominence of hardline political stances towards immigration, most Americans still support encouraging the immigration of high-skilled people into the United States, according to a Pew Research Center report released yesterday.

Even those who want fewer immigrants overall still support high-skilled immigration, suggesting that their animosity may be targeted at low-skilled immigrants in particular, the study noted.

The US has a smaller proportion of highly-skilled immigrants compared to other advanced economies.

The study provided a snapshot of public attitudes towards immigration in 12 advanced economies with an immigrant population of at least 500,000, which also formed 10 per cent or more of the national population in 2015. The other 11 countries were: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Britain.

Around 1,000 adults per country were surveyed from May to June last year, and researchers also analysed 2015 labour force surveys and government censuses.

Roughly eight in 10, or 78 per cent, of American adults support encouraging highly skilled people to immigrate and work in their country, according to 1,500 US nationals aged 18 and older surveyed, a sample representative of national demographics.

Similar levels of Swedish, British, Canadian, German and Australian adults also supported attracting highly-skilled immigrants to their countries, with Sweden posting the highest level of support – 88 per cent.

And across the 12 countries, adults who were younger, earned more, or were more highly-educated tended to be more supportive of attracting highly-skilled immigrants to their countries.

The study by the non-partisan Pew Research Center comes amid a government shutdown fuelled by gridlock over the funding of President Donald Trump’s border wall, a security measure ostensibly to curb illegal immigration. The study notes that about a quarter, or 10.7 million, of US immigrants are there illegally; these are generally less educated than those in the US legally.

Most of America’s green cards, which grant lawful permanent residence in the country, also go to categories of immigrants who are not required to fulfil any educational requirement. In the 2017 fiscal year, 66 per cent of green cards went to immigrants sponsored by family members, and 13 per cent went to refugees or asylum seekers.

Together, these aspects of the American immigration system help to explain why highly-educated immigrants form just over a third of the foreign-born population in the US, a lower share than in other countries.

Nonetheless, the US by virtue of its sheer size is home to the most college-educated immigrants in the world. The education level of immigrants in the US is rising and is likely to keep doing so, wrote the report’s authors, senior researcher Phillip Connor and associate director of global migration and demography research Neil Ruiz.

“This trend may continue. The Trump administration, along with some Republican members of Congress, have called for new immigration laws that favour more highly educated migrants through a more merit-based programme,” they said in the report.

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# Reality check needed on land transport masterplan

It's all very well to promote walking and cycling, but doing so requires major changes to Singapore's built environment and commuting habits



**Christopher Tan**

Senior Transport Correspondent

More than 7,000 people have given their suggestions on how Singapore's next land transport masterplan should be crafted.

As someone who has been a motoring writer for 30 years and a transport journalist for close to 25, I thought I might chip in.

To begin, it is useful to remind ourselves that transport is a means to an end. We drive, take public transport, hail a cab or share a bicycle to get to where we want to go. We rarely do so just for the fun of it. The other thing about urban transport is that it tends to be extremely peakish in nature. The morning and evening peak hours make up one-third of public transport operational hours, but account for half of the entire day's passenger volume.

Which means it will be increasingly costly to keep building infrastructure to cater to peak volume as the population increases. It is not sustainable – economically or environmentally, especially for a small country like ours.

So, Land Transport Master Plan 2040 (LTMP 2040) should not be solely a transport initiative. City planners in the National



If Singapore were to promote cycling and the use of other mobility devices, it must do more than having rules govern their use on pedestrian walkways, says the writer. This is because having bikes and scooters on pathways will make walking less comfortable and a little less safe for pedestrians. ST FILE PHOTO

Development Ministry will have to help accelerate Singapore's decentralisation plan, so that people need not commute far from where they live to get to work or play.

Despite all the investments in rail and bus systems over the years, Singaporeans still spend around 40 to 60 minutes per commute – hardly changed from a decade ago.

The Manpower Ministry must continue to encourage workplaces to institute flexi-hours, so as to spread out demand for buses and trains. Surely, more can be done to boost telecommuting – especially in this day and age. The conversation should shift from granting mobility to ensuring accessibility. If you can walk or cycle comfortably to where you want to go, you will rely less on motorised means of transport.

This brings us to what seems to be the thrust of LTMP 2040: walk, cycle and ride (WCR). Getting people to walk and cycle more is a lofty but worthwhile ambition.

But let us be realistic. Our built environment is not conducive to either activity. Yes we have a pretty comprehensive park connector network, but it is more suitable for leisure riding. As the name implies, the routes meander around our parks and green spaces.

If we are serious about cycling, we must look to Copenhagen, the cycling capital of the world. Copenhagen started building cycling tracks more than a century ago, in 1900. Today, its network has grown to around 350km.

These tracks are properly segregated, each measuring an average of 2.5m wide. There are also elevated crossings to provide those who cycle as seamless a journey as possible. Today, more than 40 per cent of trips in Copenhagen are done on bicycles, and the city aims to raise this to 50 per cent.

It is worthwhile, too, to note that the Danes who bike regularly own their bicycles. Although there are

bike-share schemes in Copenhagen, they are not doing well – like in most other cities.

If Singapore were to promote cycling (and the use of other mobility devices), it must do more than having rules govern their use on pedestrian walkways – no matter how well those rules are enforced.

Like it or not, having bikes and scooters on pathways will make walking less comfortable and a little less safe for pedestrians, especially the very young or old. It takes more than covered walkways to make walking more comfortable, too. Walkways must be wide enough, and they must be well-paved. We set our sights on world-class standards for road and rail, why can't we do the same for walkways?

Until recently, Penang was a pedestrian's nightmare, with broken paths and disjointed walkways. But if you go there now, you will notice a sea change. Yes, many sections are still narrower

than ideal, but at least they are all surfaced flawlessly. It makes walking a joy.

In Hong Kong and Tokyo, people walk a lot more than in Singapore. In fact, the longevity of residents there has been attributed partly to the distance they cover by foot each day. One reason they walk so much is that their train stations are well connected to all buildings and amenities in the vicinity. You can literally walk for kilometres underground – shielded from the elements and other traffic.

It is not so in Singapore, although the upcoming Thomson-East Coast Line promises to be an improvement.

Of course constructing long underground walkways and providing lighting and air-conditioning is expensive. To offset the cost, incorporate commerce. Shops, eateries and services along the way will make walking less monotonous, too.

People will walk farther if the path they take is not sterile.

The final letter in WCR – ride – refers to the use of buses, trains, taxis, private-hire cars and ride-sharing. At first glance, it seems logical to lump all these together.

But it is not. Clearly, we should encourage the use of trains and buses. If well patronised, they are the two most efficient ways of moving the masses in a city.

The best way to encourage people to use buses and trains is, of course, to ensure a high level of service. Improvement has been made to the North-South, East-West MRT lines – which carry the bulk of rail commuters – but much more needs to be done to bring service standards to where they should be.

Ride-sharing should likewise be encouraged. Ride-sharing refers to a pooling of a resource (in most cases, cars), which makes for a more efficient way to commute. It is non-commercial, although users usually compensate the vehicle owner with a nominal sum.

Unfortunately, private-hire operators have latched on to the term. It is a misnomer when they use it. "Private-hire cars" are in effect taxis by another name. They are for-profit entities, and not "sharers".

Many cities have made the mistake of not recognising Uber and Uber-like firms for what they are: taxi operators with new tech. Many find themselves facing a regulatory quagmire as a result. The other distinction to be made pertains to car-sharing – where a fleet of vehicles is shared by several users who pay a subscription and usage fee. Car-sharing is not ride-sharing.

Now, taxis, private-hire cars and shared cars do not contribute to our "car-lite" objectives. In fact, they do the opposite. This is evident in the 60,000km mileage these vehicles clock each year, about three or four times the distance clocked by the average family car.

Ride-sharing, on the other hand, does because the vehicle does not deviate much from its usual routes. This is not to say taxis and taxi-like services – whether human-operated, or autonomous in the far future – do not have a place in our transport landscape. Like private cars, they too have a role to play. If we do away with them altogether today, Singapore will grind to a halt. But should they be a central part of LTMP 2040? I think not.

The way I see it, Singapore faces huge challenges ahead if it does not get its transport plans right. The population is growing, and expectations are rising. The task at hand – to reshape our urban environment and consequently, human behaviour – requires a whole-of-government approach.

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# When more democracy isn't more democratic

**Max Fisher and Amanda Taub**

To hear some British politicians tell it, they are mere servants. They can only execute popular will, whatever the cost to the country or themselves. To do otherwise would be to betray democracy itself.

"The will of the British people is an instruction that must be delivered," former prime minister David Cameron said after voters narrowly approved leaving the European Union in a 2016 referendum, though this meant both his resignation and, in his telling, devastation to the British economy.

Yet lawmakers also believe they must determine for themselves how to serve Britain's best interests. Prime Minister Theresa May, Mr Cameron's successor, justified her plan for withdrawal, or Brexit, as the best way forward, even if it was not the most popular.

Voters seem to share these dual expectations. The British government, many believe, should first and foremost safeguard the national good, including from the whims of public opinion, which has flipped several times since the initial vote. But it must also respect public opinion, as captured in that nearly three-year-old vote, above all else.

That contradiction "is as old as liberal democracy itself", said Harvard University political scientist Steven Levitsky. But it is growing sharper and more

destabilising and not just in Britain.

Around the world, rising populists and angry electorates are putting pressure, sometimes deliberately, on what Dr Levitsky called democracy's "two conflicting imperatives: majority rule and liberalism". In Western countries, white majorities are challenging rights long promised to minority groups and outsiders.

Populist leaders, including US President Donald Trump, are clashing with institutions that they say oppose popular will. Political establishments weaken every year.

The result is a widening divide between two visions of democracy. There is the ideal of rule by the people. And there is the more complicated reality, in which institutions and representatives balance majority opinion against considerations like universal rights and the common good.

Unable to reconcile those contradictory demands, once solid-seeming democracies are breaking down. Faith in a system that makes two contradictory promises is declining. The resulting chaos, far from elevating one vision of democracy over the other, could weaken both.

Democracy may have begun as the idea that authority comes from the people, but there was always more to it. As its modern form first took hold, philosophers and revolutionaries debated how to balance several lofty ambitions, of which popular rule was just one. And they fretted over how to make their new system last.

They concluded that democracy

could never work as "simply the rule of public opinion", said Dr Nadia Urbinati, a Columbia University scholar of democracy. It would need "rules and procedures" to guard against factionalism, an abusive majority or a power-hungry leader.

They converged on a system in which "elections are just one leg", alongside a second leg of rules, rights and institutions, she said. "Without that, we don't call it a democracy."

Edmund Burke, an 18th-century Irish philosopher, argued that an elected leader's duty required both listening to constituents and putting his "mature judgment" ahead of their whims.

During debates over the US Constitution, James Madison warned in one of the essays that became the Federalist Papers, that unbridled majoritarianism had made earlier democracies "as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths".

Only "a republic" of representatives subject to rules and institutions as well as the public, he wrote, "promises the cure for which we are seeking". Such treatises formed the basis of today's democracies, in which the people's will is carefully incorporated, but rarely intended to dominate.

But that is not quite how this new system won the consent of everyday citizens.

The first democracies built their legitimacy on that of monarchies, then common, with a few proper nouns swopped around. "Instead of having one king, you have a collective king, the people," Dr Urbinati said.

That vision of democracy as rule by the people persists, still heard in classrooms and in campaign rallies, where citizens are told that their authority is paramount.

It has set up voters for shock and outrage when they discover, time and again, that they are not as powerful as they had thought. The checks imposed on popular will can feel like democracy failing – though it's actually the system working as intended – provoking angry backlashes.

Brexit is a near-perfect

encapsulation of this contradiction.

Mr Cameron and others sold the 2016 referendum as handing power to the people (never mind that the prime minister, confident that the measure would never pass, was really just looking for a political fig leaf). But it has left Britons more politically disaffected than at any point in years.

Members of the 48 per cent who voted to remain in the European Union have asked why a slim majority should dictate the nation's fate. Lately, with the polls having turned against Brexit, it can feel like raw majoritarian rule by a majority that no longer exists.

Meanwhile, Britons who voted to leave have watched lawmakers fight over widely divergent plans, none of which enjoys majority popular support. There is speculation about a second referendum that might overturn the first, feeding suspicion that the establishment never intended to follow the people's will.

Referendums can end up feeling less democratic than promised in

**Referendums can end up feeling less democratic than promised in part, political scientists argue, because they are not actually all that democratic. They tend to be volatile, turning on unrelated political events or even the weather... They are notoriously poor at reflecting public opinion, particularly on a complex issue like Brexit. And they force majoritarian rule onto a political system that is designed to resist it, setting up voters and leaders for collision.**

part, political scientists argue, because they are not actually all that democratic.

They tend to be volatile, turning on unrelated political events or even the weather, which is thought to have influenced Colombia's 2016 referendum on a peace deal with insurgents. They are notoriously poor at reflecting public opinion, particularly on a complex issue like Brexit. And they force majoritarian rule onto a political system that is designed to resist it, setting up voters and leaders for collision.

But even if democracies are not designed for direct popular rule, democracy is often idealised as being exactly that, making it nearly impossible for British leaders to justify ignoring the 2016 vote. Even many who wish to do so are arguing for holding a second referendum, repeating the same risks as in the first.

Challenges to liberal democracy's checks on popular input are growing globally.

In France, the yellow vest protesters, not content to defer national policy to centrist President Emmanuel Macron, have demanded that the country hold regular referendums on new legislation.

The Alternative for Germany, a far-right party, has also pushed for referendums, including on whether to leave the European Union. Though the party is unlikely to get its wish, merely asking allows it to portray itself as a champion of popular will against an unresponsive establishment.

Some elected leaders are governing as if by never-ending referendum, pushing for raw popular will to carry the day.

In the United States, failing so far to get his border wall, Mr Trump – as populist leaders often do when institutions stand in their way – has portrayed Congress as opposing the will of the people. Then he allowed the federal government to be partially shut down.

Other populists have taken things further. The ruling party of Poland, after portraying the judiciary as an obstacle to popular will, briefly tried to purge the Supreme Court.

In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte told the police that they could keep citizens safe only by favouring him over the rule of law. Such crises are growing more common, Dr Levitsky argues, because of a shift within democracies.

Leaders have always needed the support of both voters and establishments to win elections. Voters wanted popular rule, establishments wanted checks and institutions; the two held each other in balance.

But in recent years, a series of changes, including the rise of social media and online fund raising, has severely weakened the power of establishments.

"Now, politicians are learning that they need to be much more responsive to voters than to the establishment," Dr Levitsky said.

Marginal figures like Mr Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, a long-time lawmaker and now the President, can win by promising to empower popular will over the establishment. That doesn't have to mean abolishing democratic checks, but it makes doing so far easier. That can be taken to extremes. A new generation of elected strongmen has risen by exploiting the gap between popular expectations of democracy and its reality.

Institutions and rules really do limit the public's role. Though they are meant to protect universal rights and the common good, they can be portrayed by populists as an elite conspiracy to subvert the people.

The only way to save democracy, the populists argue, is for a strong leader to smash those institutions and rule directly on the people's behalf.

This can initially feel liberating to that leader's supporters. But, as Madison warned in the Federalist Papers, a democracy imposed "by the superior force" of an "overbearing majority" may not always remain democratic.

And sooner or later, with the establishment taken care of, strongmen tend to start going after the people themselves. NYTIMES



# What is this work of art saying?

As Singapore Art Week kicks off, a museum director says it's all right not to understand artworks and that art museums play an important role in helping audiences engage with art

Eugene Tan

For The Straits Times

As a curator and director of an art museum, I am often expected to understand all the art that I encounter at exhibitions, art fairs, biennales and artists' studios – just to name some of the platforms where art can be seen and experienced today.

While this is not unreasonable, it is certainly not always the case, especially with contemporary art that has been made very recently. I may also not understand what I am seeing at times.

When this happens, I would endeavour to find more information that is readily available on site, such as wall labels, brochures or press statements. There are of course tools that I can fall back on – developed through the course of my training and career – to try to comprehend the image, object, installation or environment that I am seeing.

For example, I can examine the visual and formal composition of the artwork and its use of materials, or I can draw on art historical and theoretical analysis. This is because all art, even the most recent contemporary art, can be seen within the larger development of art, or the history of art, and all artists' practices are to some extent informed by this history, either consciously or unconsciously.

Hence, art history and related theoretical frameworks often offer entry points and clues to understanding an artwork or an artist's practice. Using a combination of these different forms of analysis usually then allows me to get a sense of what an artwork is about and to develop some form of judgment. But sometimes, I still struggle to understand what I see before me.

Why is this the case and what does this signify?

There are two explanations for



this. The first is that the artist is developing and using a visual language that is beyond the current epistemological conditions of our society to understand, that the work is ahead of its time and we don't quite have the means to understand it yet.

The second explanation is simply that it may not be a piece of good or interesting art. This is something important to keep in mind, as not all the new art that we see will have a place in art history in time to come.

Why then is it important to understand art, and what is art's relationship to society?

The simple answer is that artists offer a different perspective on our world and the times in which we live. Art has the ability to alter our experience of the world, to heighten our sensibilities, so that we walk away from an experience with an artwork with a different perspective of the world.

It has the ability to enable a transformative and radical experience of decentring as individuals. This is exemplified by a seminal work by American conceptual artist Bruce Nauman that uses neon lights to reveal the text: "The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths."

Minimalist artist Sol LeWitt also famously wrote: "Artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach."

Artists provide a different world view through their art and reveal aspects of our world that we may not otherwise be conscious of. Take the minimalist artists as an example – whose works are the subject of an exhibition currently at National Gallery Singapore. The artists highlighted the serial nature of society in the 1960s through their works, brought about by the increasing industrialisation of societies. Through their mimicking of this serial logic and the use of

industrial methods and materials of production, they also highlighted the way in which our experience of the world was transformed and the way meaning is created in society.

Sometimes, artists present perspectives of the world that are incomprehensible to many viewers, so that even art professionals have trouble understanding them. But these may be artists who are ahead of their times, producing works that are especially significant, even if we have the means to make sense of those works only after some time has passed, when knowledge in our society has developed sufficiently.

This also explains why artists are sometimes recognised only posthumously for their significance and contributions to changing the way we understand art and its changing role in our society.

## ART MUSEUMS AND TRUST

This is where the role of art museums comes in.

Based on unbiased scholarship and research, art museums evaluate the significance of an artist in terms of his contribution to the historical development of art, and look at how an artist transforms our understanding of art and its relationship to society.

This is sometimes different from how the art market values the work of artists. In our neoliberal capitalist societies, where much of the media interest in art revolves around the spectacle, monetary value and ever-increasing record prices paid for art, it is important to realise that many artists who were popular and successful commercially in their day have no place in art history, especially when you consider the number of artists who have been remembered in history, compared with the number of artists working and practising then.

Art museums also play an

important role providing access to works of art. This, of course, refers to the physical access that enables audiences to engage through direct and primary experience with works of art.

In our digital age, where the majority of our experiences involve reproducible two-dimensional images, experiences with actual works of art are irreplaceable.

In a museum, the viewer experiences an artwork in real time and space as physical things composed of specific materiality of a certain size and scale, and presented under unique circumstances. The whole experience of encountering and engaging with a work of art can be sublime.

This holds true even for well-known works. Contrary to Frankfurt School philosopher Walter Benjamin's argument that an artwork loses its aura when its image is mechanically reproduced, evidence has proven that the more an image of an artwork gets reproduced in our current digital age, the more the demand to see and experience the actual work of art.

Art museums also provide intellectual access to knowledge to help audiences better understand and appreciate art. Art museums have an obligation to present art in ways that encourage access to their different meanings and truths: physical, aesthetic, contextual and moral.

They have a responsibility to help audiences identify various entry points into artworks and appreciate their different and complex dimensions. As artworks shown in museums are of a certain quality, having been selected by knowledgeable and well-trained curators, many would merit attentive viewing.

Art museums enable this through various interpretative materials, such as wall labels and explanations, audio guides, tours

by curators or docents, and publications, as well as talks by artists, curators and other experts.

So, what should one do when faced with an artwork that appears incomprehensible? My advice would be to trust in the museums and allow them to help you discover ways to better understand and appreciate art.

The issue of trust between the art museum and the public is an important one, but which is not often widely understood. Building the public's trust is one of the most important missions of all art museums, as well as retaining the confidence that the public has in an art museum and its activities.

What I have written thus far outlines some aspects of the art museum's public trust – its duty to provide physical access to art and access to knowledge about art, and an obligation to provoke as well as inspire curiosity and wonder through experiences with art. This then helps transform our world view.

However, above all, a crucial part of this public trust comes from demonstrating an art museum's seriousness of purpose, its respect for art and artists, ensuring curatorial decisions are based on impartial and thorough scholarship and research, and integrity.

It is by projecting and demonstrating these qualities that art museums then inspire confidence and public trust that the critical frameworks used by the curators in the selection and curation of the exhibitions are impartial, uninfluenced by political, commercial or other considerations and, above all, driven by a mission to improve society through art – a value held universally by all art museums.

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• Dr Eugene Tan is director, National Gallery Singapore.

Visitors at the National Gallery Singapore. Art museums have a responsibility to help audiences identify various entry points into artworks and appreciate their different and complex dimensions, says the writer. They enable this through various interpretative materials, such as wall labels, audio guides, tours by curators or docents, and publications. ST FILE PHOTO

## Ask:NUS Economists

# Revisions to copyright law have far-reaching implications

Ivan Png

For The Straits Times

**Q** Why is the Government revising Singapore's copyright law?

**A** Copyright is the intellectual property right that underpins the software and the so-called creative content industries (writing, composing, and performing).

With advances in technology, the boundary between software and content is fast blurring – think Dota, Spotify, YouTube and Google search. (Disclosure: I own a minuscule number of shares in Alphabet, parent company of Google, and am closely related to a Google engineer.)

The law must keep up with such developments to fit social and economic needs. Last week, the Ministry of Law announced revisions to the Copyright Act. The Government has been consulting on the revisions since 2016.

While copyright law may seem quite arcane to the person in the

street, it affects almost everyone – who does not watch TV, stream videos, use smartphone apps, or patronise libraries or museums?

The number of consultations (two rounds in 2016 and 2017), and the long time the Government has taken to decide on the revisions, is a clear indication of the challenges. As with many changes in policy, there are winners and losers, and the Government must strike a balance.

Two changes with possibly large business and economic implications are the provisions to amend the definition of "fair use" and to explicitly allow text and data mining.

"Fair use" is a concept that Singapore adapted from US law. Under this principle, one can use copyrighted work to a limited extent without the permission of the owner. It is this principle that allows me to use parts of books in my lectures without copyright permission. Of course, the issue is the limits that define fair use. The US Copyright Act defines fair use by four factors: (i) the purpose and character of the use, including whether for commercial or

non-profit educational purposes; (ii) nature of the work; (iii) amount and substantiality of the portion used; and (iv) the economic effect of the use.

In adapting the US concept, Singapore added a fifth factor – "the possibility of obtaining the work or adaptation within a reasonable time at an ordinary commercial price". The Government feels that this fifth factor has caused confusion and plans to delete it.

It is important to strike the right balance with fair use. For instance, the concept is a pillar of YouTube. Indeed, YouTube offers to support the fair use legal defence – up to US\$1 million (S\$1.36 million) – of content creators who are sued for copyright infringement.

Another important application of fair use in technology is Google Books. This project has digitised more than 25 million books for the benefit of anyone with an Internet connection, and, importantly, for posterity. Authors and publishers sued Google for copyright infringement but US courts decided that the actions of Google Books

were fair use.

The Government also plans to explicitly permit text and data mining of copyright material. A recent dispute between the career portal, LinkedIn, and a California start-up, hiQ Labs, exemplifies the issues. hiQ Labs has made a business of trawling public LinkedIn profiles to help clients identify employees who might be at risk of quitting. Who are they? Answer: those who post and update profiles on LinkedIn.

To analyse LinkedIn profiles, one would first have to amass and

**While copyright law may seem quite arcane to the person in the street, it affects almost everyone – who does not watch TV, stream videos, use smartphone apps, or patronise libraries or museums?**

organise the profiles. Indeed, some years ago, one of my National University of Singapore colleagues did just that. We used the data to study the mobility of inventors and published the research in the Strategic Management Journal. Our Government proposes to legalise the use of copyright material for the purpose of such data analysis.

Interestingly, the legal action between hiQ Labs and LinkedIn was fought on various grounds but did not mention copyright infringement. This was likely because US courts would have recognised that LinkedIn did not have copyright over the profiles, and even if it did, the actions of hiQ Labs would be covered by fair use.

So, why the need for the new provision to protect text and data mining in Singapore? In the United States, the boundaries of copyright are continually shaped and clarified by private litigation such as the Google Books case.

By contrast, our market is so small that it might not be worthwhile for individual businesses to invest in legal action. Consequently, there is more of a

role for the Government to proactively delineate legal rights.

The business and economic effects of the amended definition of "fair use" and explicitly permitting text and data mining are difficult to predict. The legal fees that Google and LinkedIn spent suggest that the effects could be substantial. Hopefully, the Government has got it right and the revisions of our Copyright Act would stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation in the related fields.

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• This is a monthly series by the NUS Department of Economics. Each month, a panel will address a topical issue. If you have a burning question on economics, write to stopinion@sph.com.sg with "Ask NUS" in the subject field.



# BIG PICTURE


**WEATHER**

 Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.  
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PHOTO: REUTERS

## Embracing the tech of fashion

At the Haute Couture Spring-Summer 2019 collection show in Paris on Monday, Dutch designer Iris van Herpen explored the idea of celestial cartography, with dresses covered in concentric lay-

ers echoing a topographic map.

According to her website, Ms van Herpen has been inventing new forms of sartorial expression for her dresses since her first show in 2007 by combining the most

traditional and radical materials and garment construction methods into her vision.

The 34-year-old is often hailed as a pioneer in utilising 3D printing as a garment construction tech-

nique, with a long-sleeved column dress made from a net-like material forming waves of neon orange pigment flushed around the body being featured in Monday's show.

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# C1 BUSINESS

## \$820m

RESERVE PRICE FOR RELAUNCHED GRANGE HEIGHTS COLLECTIVE SALE C5

Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Masagos Zulkifli with British High Commissioner to Singapore Scott Wightman at the Unlocking Capital for Sustainability forum at St Regis hotel yesterday. Mr Masagos noted that sustainability efforts made by financial institutions here come in an era when climate change is no longer a distant threat but an immediate one. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO



## Finance sector key in battling climate change, says Masagos

**Minister credits efforts by firms, urges them to keep supporting activities with green benefits**

**Sue-Ann Tan**

Developer City Developments Limited (CDL) got the ball rolling in 2017 when it issued Singapore's first green bond. Now, around \$2 billion of such products have been released here by local and foreign issuers.

Banks such as OCBC and Standard Chartered are also jumping on the sustainability bandwagon.

Last June, OCBC partnered agribusiness giant Wilmar on a US\$200 million (\$272 million) bilateral loan that linked interest rates to key performance indicators centred on sustainability.

StanChart decided last September to stop funding coal-powered plants. These developments are among the latest efforts made by financial institutions here to be sustainable and come in an era

where climate change is no longer a distant threat but an immediate one, said Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Masagos Zulkifli.

Mr Masagos told a forum organised by sustainable media organisation Eco-Business and UN Environment yesterday: "The finance sector plays an important role in unlocking and directing capital flows towards economic activities with environmental benefits."

"It is encouraging to see growing numbers of investors who want to 'do well' and 'do good' at the same time. Climate change is no longer a distant threat on the horizon, but one that is near and present. It is a long-term issue that will require the commitment of governments, investors, businesses and consumers."

Mr Masagos urged financial institutions to keep contributing to the development of new environmental, social and governance-related products "that the global economy will need, as it moves towards greater sustainability".

A report by DBS and UN Environ-

INVESTMENT FOR THE FUTURE

**Green financing plays a pivotal role to channel capital to building greener and more resilient cities and infrastructure. With the global shift to a low carbon and resilient economy, sustainable financing vehicles, be it bonds or loans, will have tremendous growth potential. Businesses can look at what material impact they can make in their field and see it not as a cost but an investment for the future.**



**MS ESTHER AN**, chief sustainability officer of City Developments Limited.

ment on Green Finance Opportunities in Asean said that an estimated US\$200 billion of green investment is needed annually from 2016 to 2030 in this region.

Mr Masagos added that Singapore has been taking steps to increase its financial sustainability. Most recently, locally based Sindicatum Renewable Energy issued green bonds that aim to support its projects in the Philippines.

Last year, OCBC was the joint lead manager and bookrunner for China General Nuclear Power Corporation's €500 million (\$573 million) green bond. It was the bank's first green bond transaction.

Ms Koh Ching Ching, head of group brand and communications at OCBC, said in a statement: "By partnering government bodies, advocates and citizen groups, we hope that our collective efforts can lead to impactful action to achieve sustainable development and climate action."

Mr Surya Bagchi, StanChart's global head of project and export finance, said: "Mobilising finance to

support a low-carbon energy future is a key priority in our fight against climate change."

CDL, as a front runner in sustainability, is hoping that other businesses and sectors can also play a part in their own areas.

Ms Esther An, its chief sustainability officer, said: "Green financing plays a pivotal role to channel capital to building greener and more resilient cities and infrastructure."

"With the global shift to a low carbon and resilient economy, sustainable financing vehicles, be it bonds or loans, will have tremendous growth potential."

"Businesses can look at what material impact they can make in their field and see it not as a cost but an investment for the future."

This is the second year that the forum, Unlocking Capital for Sustainability, has been held. The event at the St Regis hotel attracted around 100 finance and business leaders, project developers and entrepreneurs.

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## SMEs will drive growth – if they expand abroad now: Panellist

**Seow Bei Yi**  
Business Correspondent

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will be the future drivers of Singapore's growth, provided they make the move now to go overseas, said DBS senior economist Irvin Seah at a business outlook forum yesterday.

In a panel discussion that covered various issues including how smaller enterprises can grow their businesses, Mr Seah said given Singapore's small domestic market, SMEs have to look abroad to expand and "borrow growth from the region".

He added that this will become increasingly important as the Republic's population is set to shrink from 2025 without immigration. Its median age of 35 to 40 today is likely to hit 45 to 50 in a decade or two as well, he told the annual forum organised by the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"As the population continues to age, unless you are willing to open up the floodgates to immigration –

which I don't think is going to be the case – Singapore is going to become less and less attractive to foreign investment and multinational corporations," he said. "Who will drive the growth? Local companies will be the only ones left."

There is another benefit to having local SMEs expand in the region, said Mr Seah. Their returns will come back to Singapore in the form of corporate tax revenue, which can then be used to finance higher social spending needed for the ageing population.

Another panellist, OCBC Bank's head of treasury research and strategy Selena Ling, said that apart from looking to China for growth, there are many opportunities in Singapore's backyard as well. She noted that the US-China trade war has also made Asean more committed, with a greater push for economic integration.

SMEs can also turn to technology to boost their productivity, said UOB's head of research Suan Teck Kin. He added that banks and regional networks can help them to



(From left) Panel moderator and Singapore Management University Professor Annie Koh at the business outlook forum yesterday with UOB head of research Suan Teck Kin, DBS senior economist Irvin Seah and OCBC Bank head of treasury research and strategy Selena Ling. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

identify opportunities as well.

But, going forward, smaller businesses can do with more support, said Mr Seah, during the panel discussion moderated by Professor

Annie Koh of the Singapore Management University.

Looking ahead to the national Budget, which will be announced by Finance Minister Heng Swee

Keat on Feb 18, Mr Seah noted that while it was likely to be a continuation of past Budgets with few surprises – a view shared by the other economists – there were policies that can be improved. For example, loans such as the SME Working Capital Loan from financial institutions tend to look for minimum risk and highest returns, meaning that loans tend to go to companies with better financial standing and not always to the ones that need it most.

One way to change this is to have the Government increase its risk sharing for smaller companies. This has been done with the Automation Support Package, where the Government's risk-share with participating financial institutions rose to 70 per cent from 50 per cent, he added.

Spending on healthcare and infrastructure in the Budget was touched on by Ms Ling, who said there are areas that can be improved on as Singapore prepares for an ageing population. Much has been done but the country may not be ready by 2025, she said.

"It requires a lot of investments... (and) a rethink of our healthcare system," she said, referring to recent discussions over how much one can claim with MediShield Life, which is a health insurance plan administered by the Central Provident Fund Board, to help pay for large hospital bills and selected costly outpatient treatments.

On personal investment, apart from maintaining a diversified portfolio, the economists flagged the need to upgrade one's skills, given that professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs), who form a large part of the workforce, appear increasingly vulnerable to job loss. Up to 70 per cent of those retrenched are PMETs, and the number has been rising, noted Mr Seah.

Ms Ling said: "The hard question I see is that this is a reality that we have to face... Maybe artificial intelligence and machine learning... may not replace us in the next three years, but (they are) coming."

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# S'pore offers war risk insurance for ships

Part of efforts to boost maritime sector, new product is also open to vessels not registered here

Derek Wong

Singapore now offers war risk insurance for ships, joining the likes of established maritime nations such as Greece, Japan, Norway and Britain.

Almost 800 Singapore-registered ships will be covered under the Singapore War Risks Insurance Conditions (SWRIC) launched yesterday.

Previously, ships here had to subscribe to insurance provided by overseas companies such as British insurance giant Lloyd's of London.

The SWRIC is also open to ships that are not registered in Singapore.

"As a novel and improved product offering to the international maritime community, the SWRIC contributes to Singapore's standing as a thought leader in the field of marine insurance," said Dr Lam Pin Min, Senior Minister of State for Transport and Health, yesterday.

He was speaking at the Singapore Shipping Association Chinese New Year cocktail reception at Raffles City Convention Centre.

Dr Lam said that the new product was Singapore's equivalent of the war risk insurance cover that is provided by internationally used marine insurance plans such as the Nordic Plan and Britain's Institute Time Clauses.

War risk insurance covers ships in the event of endangerment to the vessel or the crew, such as in situations where ships are the victims of collateral damage in war-torn areas.

The SWRIC is part of efforts to improve the local maritime sector, which is also undergoing a digitali-



sation drive.

Yesterday, the Singapore Shipping Association, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, Singapore Customs and Infocomm Media Development Authority signed a memorandum of understanding

to develop an inter-operability framework for electronic trade documents.

At the event, Dr Lam said that 2018 was a challenging year but Singapore did well, with more containers passing through its docks.

A total of 36.6 million containers were handled here last year, up 8.7 per cent from 2017.

The sector also contributes 7 per cent of gross domestic product.

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Almost 800 Singapore-registered ships will now be covered under the Singapore War Risks Insurance Conditions. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

## Budget 2019

# Analysts expect looser fiscal policy to cushion economy

ROOM FOR FISCAL SUPPORT

**As public finances remain healthy, there is room for the authorities to provide some support to the slowing economy. Singapore's structurally sound fiscal position due to years of fiscal prudence will provide room for the Government to provide support to the economy.**



FITCH SOLUTIONS, in its report.

A looser fiscal policy will be a key theme in the upcoming Budget, according to Fitch Solutions analysts.

In a report, they said that an impending global slowdown and the pressure on Singapore's export-driven economy would call for policy action.

The report noted that the risks "are likely to prompt (the Government) to adopt policies to cushion the economy through domestic-oriented initiatives" such as public infrastructure spending.

This could include bringing forward rail and other redevelopment projects, as a softer public works pipeline was seen as a drag on the economy, as well as the struggling construction sector last year.

Such infrastructure works have already been put on the table for the coming decade, the report noted.

"As public finances remain healthy, there is room for the authorities to provide some support to the slowing economy," it added.

"Singapore's structurally sound fiscal position due to years of fiscal prudence will provide room for the Government to provide support to the economy."

With the next general election due by April 2021, the Fitch team said that the Budget, which will be unveiled next month, could offer

hints as to whether the People's Action Party (PAP) will call an early vote this year.

"Should we see fiscal transfers to a large proportion of Singapore citizens surprise aggressively to the upside, this would suggest that the PAP may be looking to call elections in 2019 as it has already shaped up the fourth-generation leadership in 2018," said the report, which was released on Monday.

It also noted that the 2015 Budget posted a primary balance deficit on the back of rebates for middle-class households.

The upcoming Budget will likely contain a focus on social spending, including more details on the Merdeka Generation welfare package for voters born in the 1950s, the analysts added.

Meanwhile, Fitch Solutions also forecast a primary surplus of 0.6 per cent of gross domestic product for the previous Budget, against the official expectation of a deficit of 1.6 per cent, as the analysts pointed to the Government's track record of doing better than it estimates.

The 2018 Budget had originally projected a primary deficit of \$7.34 billion and a basic deficit of \$9.16 billion after special transfers, excluding top-ups to endowment and trust funds.

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# Assets under management to surge in region: PwC

Asia-Pacific growth expected to outpace that of any other zone globally over next few years

Growth in the Asia-Pacific's asset management industry is set to outpace that of any other zone globally over the next few years, a report noted yesterday.

The PwC report estimates that from 2017 to 2025, assets under management (AUM) in this region will almost double.

Asia-Pacific AUM is set to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 8.7 per cent, from US\$15.1 trillion (S\$20.5 trillion) in 2017 to US\$16.9 trillion in 2020 and US\$29.6 trillion by 2025, assuming protectionism remains limited and geopolitical activity stays relatively sanguine.

In particular, AUM in retail or mutual funds, including exchange-traded funds, are estimated to more than double to US\$11.9 trillion.

Meanwhile, alternative asset popularity among Asian investors is expected to surge from US\$2 trillion in 2017 to US\$6.9 trillion by 2025, especially in real estate and infrastructure investment, said the PwC report.

Alternative assets refer to private equity, real estate, infrastructure, commodities and hedge funds.

PwC also noted that Asia is set to become one of the largest infrastructure investment regions globally, driven by massive growth expected from China's Belt and Road Initiative and other undertakings across the region.

It added that the key management hubs of the region, Singapore and Hong Kong, will likely be joined by Shanghai.

Furthermore, the burgeoning wealth of individuals in the Asia-Pacific region will also provide opportunities for asset managers.

This will in turn propel huge growth in the region's wealth management industry, allowing it to overtake the more developed regions of Europe and North America, PwC said.

Regionally, the shift towards transparency surrounding fees, coupled with younger, tech-savvy investors turning to lower-cost alternatives such as robo-advisers, are set to increase pressure on fees and decrease margins, the report noted.

PwC's Asia-Pacific Asset and Wealth Management leader Justin Ong said: "As new investors enter the market, the industry will become increasingly digitalised, and investors will look to managers who can tailor portfolios to their needs. Firms will need to combat fee pressure by reducing costs and gaining new investors."

"As such, asset and wealth managers should reorganise their business structure to support their priorities and specific capabilities and cut costs elsewhere. Firms must also embrace technology and nurture and retain talent as the industry reinvents itself to reflect its widening customer base."

Separately, the report noted that venture capital is one of the fastest-growing opportunities in the Asia-Pacific. The region now ranks just below the United States in terms of deals, with China leading the market and accounting for five of the top 10 largest venture capital investments at the end of 2017.

And with investors demanding more clarity in their investments, sustainability investing is also on the rise, in part due to millennials who prefer to invest in alignment with their personal values, the report said.

RETHINK BUSINESS STRUCTURE

As such, asset and wealth managers should reorganise their business structure to support their priorities and specific capabilities and cut costs elsewhere. Firms must also embrace technology and nurture and retain talent as the industry reinvents itself to reflect its widening customer base.

”

PwC'S ASIA-PACIFIC ASSET AND WEALTH MANAGEMENT LEADER JUSTIN ONG, on how firms can combat fee pressure.



## Oil sector to ratchet up 2019 spending as confidence levels rise

LONDON • After years of gloom, the oil industry is out of its slump.

Three-quarters of senior oil and gas professionals surveyed by energy and maritime services company DNV GL AS say they are optimistic about the sector's growth this year, their sunniest outlook since before the crude-price collapse in 2014.

Confidence across the energy industry is now where it was in 2010, when Brent soared to US\$95 a barrel, about 50 per cent above today's level.

That good cheer will translate into higher spending, with 70 per cent of professionals saying that they will maintain or increase capital expenditure budgets this year.

Many firms say they are competitive even as oil-price volatility heightens in reaction to geopolitical turmoil, after cutting costs to survive a collapse that lasted until 2017.

"Growth will be important and there is a strong belief in new investment," said Ms Liv Hovem, chief executive officer of DNV GL's oil and gas unit. "They're quite confident there will be a demand for oil and gas going forward. They're also confident about their competitiveness."

Still, lurking in the data were some risks to the business. The last time the industry was this confident, spending soared. That was fine as oil rose but, in 2014, the crude decline hit companies, crimping returns at many projects.

Throughout the downturn, executives focused on cutting spending. In 2016, 41 per cent of those surveyed said "cost efficiency" was their highest priority. With prices now back above US\$60 a barrel, 21 per cent of them say that it is the highest priority.

"The key question is, will companies fall back into inefficient spending habits or can they maintain their organisational austerity?" asked the report. "Our research

70%

Percentage of professionals polled who say they will maintain or increase capital expenditure budgets this year, as confidence in the oil and gas sector translates into higher spending. The survey was conducted by energy and maritime services firm DNV GL AS.

shows signs that old habits may already be resurfacing."

The relaxation around the budget may partly reflect the fact that a lot of cost-reduction programmes have already been implemented. However, not everything will stay cheap.

About half of the companies said they saw price inflation last year, with the downstream portion of the industry hit worst. In the upstream segment, only a third of companies said prices increased.

Another challenge for the oil and gas business is its ageing workforce, which could leave gaps. Young people largely find the industry unappealing.


Respondents cited skill shortages as the industry's biggest barrier to growth this year, outside of general competition and the oil price, a finding Ms Hovem found surprising.

She said there was a need to explain to the younger generation the influence it has by joining the sector, adding: "Technology, and an uptick of every kind of digital tool, will make the industry more attractive."

Digitalisation is the top research and development priority for the oil business this year, as companies see additional cost savings and safety benefits in automating processes. Meanwhile, investment in low-carbon energy will be small, with most respondents saying regulations are the main motivation to spend in the sector.

The DNV study incorporated the views of 791 senior oil and gas industry professionals between October and November, just as the price of crude slipped into its biggest quarterly decline in four years. It included companies all over the world across a variety of oil and gas roles, from service companies to explorers to refineries. BLOOMBERG


Confidence across the energy industry is now where it was in 2010, when Brent soared to US\$95 a barrel, about 50 per cent above today's level. Many firms say they are competitive even as oil-price volatility heightens in reaction to geopolitical turmoil. PHOTO: REUTERS



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# Grange Heights owners relaunch collective sale bid

Reserve price of the freehold property remains at \$820m

Owners of the Grange Heights condominium are the latest to relaunch a collective sale bid in what is a decidedly chillier market.

The tender for the St Thomas Walk freehold property opens today, said marketing agent Colliers International.

The reserve price remains at \$820 million, the same as in the second tender exercise that closed without a deal in October. This translates to \$1,948 per sq ft per plot ratio, including bonus balcony gross floor area.

No development charge is payable for the 136,676 sq ft site, which has a gross plot ratio of 2.8.

The property sector has been slowing since cooling measures were imposed last July amid a rash of collective sale bids hitting the market.

The Urban Redevelopment Authority later tightened rules on the maximum number of units in non-landed residential developments outside the central area.

Colliers noted yesterday that



Grange Heights will not be subject to the new average size requirement of 85 sq m, as it is in the central region.

The site could yield as many as 508 new apartments in various sizes, it added. The estate has 114 apartments and maisonettes and six penthouses, ranging from 1,884 sq ft to 4,575 sq ft. Each owner could make between \$5.24 million and \$10.76 million.

Grange Heights joins other properties where owners are again trying to sell their units collectively after no buyers were hooked last year.

Their sale committees have taken different tacks: Horizon Towers, which like Grange Heights is in the Orchard Road area, is asking once more for \$1.1 billion, while others, such as Park View Mansions, have

508

Number of new apartments in various sizes that the site could yield, according to Colliers.

lowered their reserve prices.

But other projects, which have yet to secure homeowner mandates to launch a tender and are facing looming deadlines, have seen more bullish approaches.

The Dairy Farm estate hiked its reserve price from \$1.69 billion to \$1.84 billion, while Pine Grove's was raised from \$1.72 billion to \$1.86 billion.

Ms Ho Siew Lan, chairman of the Grange Heights collective sale committee, said in a statement that the owners have agreed to keep the reserve price unchanged as they are "well aware of the shift in market sentiment since the new cooling measures kicked in".

"We remain cautiously optimistic... and draw confidence from Grange Heights' realistic pricing as

well as its exclusive location and superior site attributes," she added.

Colliers managing director Tang Wei Leng said: "The site has excellent attributes... and should be well sought after in view of the limited number of new launches within its immediate vicinity."

"We also believe it presents an opportunity for the developer to position itself for future market uplift when new supply completion shrinks substantially beyond 2023."

She was referring to a Colliers estimate that most ongoing and upcoming residential projects will be finished by 2022, and potentially leave annual new supply completion short of the 10-year historical average of 12,900 units from 2023.

The tender closes at 3pm on March 11.

Grange Heights collective sale committee chairman Ho Siew Lan says the owners have agreed to keep the reserve price unchanged from the second tender exercise in October as they are "well aware of the shift in market sentiment since the new cooling measures kicked in".

ST FILE PHOTO

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MAJULAH SINGAPURA

## THE MONETARY AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE

### Auction of Singapore Government Securities (SGS)

*Individual investors<sup>1</sup> may submit auction applications for the following 5-year SGS bond. This is a new bond.*

Issue details	Return	Key dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue code: N519100A</li> <li>• New issue/re-opening: New issue</li> <li>• Tenor: Approximately 5 years</li> <li>• Issuance amount: S\$2.9 billion</li> <li>• Coupon rate: To be determined at the auction</li> <li>• Coupon payment dates<sup>2</sup>: 1 Aug and 1 Feb</li> </ul>	<p>The effective rate of return if the bond is held to maturity, will be the cut-off yield determined at the auction. As this is a new bond, the <b>coupon rate will be determined by the cut-off yield</b> (see "A note on new bonds" below). As an illustration, <b>this would be about 2.07% per year</b>, based on prices as at 21 Jan 2019.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auction date: 29 Jan 2019, 12pm</li> <li>• Application deadline: Typically 1-2 business days before auction date (depending on bank)</li> <li>• Issuance date<sup>2</sup>: 1 Feb 2019</li> <li>• Maturity date<sup>2</sup>: 1 Feb 2024</li> </ul>

#### How to apply

Cash applications can be made through **DBS/POSB, OCBC and UOB ATMs and internet banking portals**, and **OCBC's mobile application**. You will need an **individual CDP account number**.

Applications using funds from Supplementary Retirement Scheme (SRS) and CPF Investment Scheme (CPFIS) accounts must be submitted in person at your agent bank.

SRS/CPFIS agent banks:

- DBS: 12 Marina Boulevard Level 3 or call 1800-111-1111
- OCBC: 65 Chulia Street or call 1800-363-3333
- UOB: 80 Raffles Place or call 1800-222-2121

#### A note on new bonds

The coupon rate for a new issue is the cut-off yield determined at the auction rounded down to the nearest 0.125%, subject to a minimum of 0.125%.

Should the coupon rate be lower (or higher) than the cut-off yield, the purchase price would be lower (or higher) than 100% of amount you applied for.

For new issues, the full bid amount will be debited from your bank account at the point of application. After the auction, any excess (shortfall) will be refunded to (deducted from) your account.

#### SGS auctions

All SGS bonds are auctioned using a **uniform price auction**. This means that all successful applicants will receive the bond at the same yield, which is the highest accepted yield (cut-off yield) of successful bids.

Applicants can choose to submit a **competitive or non-competitive bid**. If you wish to invest in the bond regardless of the return, a non-competitive bid should be submitted.

If you wish to invest in the bond only if it yields above a certain level, you may submit a competitive bid, specifying the yield that you are willing to accept. Do note that you may not get the full amount that you applied for, depending on how your bid compares to the cut-off yield.

Successful applicants will see the bonds reflected in their individual CDP accounts. Unsuccessful applicants will see the money refunded into their bank accounts.

#### Risks

Investments in SGS bonds are exposed to the risk of price changes. You may receive more or less than your principal if you sell your SGS bond before its maturity date. **If you want the flexibility to get your principal back in any given month, you may wish to consider Singapore Savings Bonds** (<http://www.sgs.gov.sg/savingsbonds>) instead.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>This document is intended for individual investors. It is for informational purposes only and does not constitute the terms of issue for this SGS bond. For the complete terms of issue, please refer to the public notice dated 22 Jan 2019 at <http://www.sgs.gov.sg/News/Bond-Announcements.aspx>. Institutional and corporate investors are advised to refer to the above-mentioned public notice.

<sup>2</sup>If MAS' electronic payment system is not operating on issuance, coupon payment or maturity date(s), then issuance, coupon payment or redemption, as the case may be, will occur on the next day when the electronic payment system is in operation.

For more information, visit <http://www.sgs.gov.sg> or call 6221 3682.



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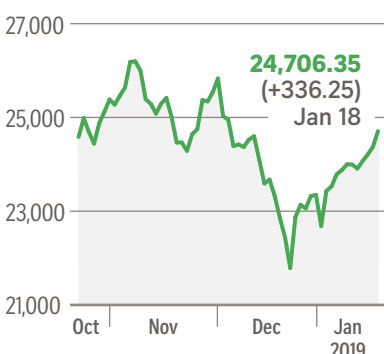
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BullsAndBears

# Asian markets slide on IMF growth warnings

## STI hurt by declines in manufacturing, transport, storage and communications

Lynette Tan

Warnings from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) about weakening global growth due to trade rows and financial market volatility sent local shares down for another session yesterday.

The IMF also cut global growth forecasts, just three months since it warned of a downturn last October.

OCBC Treasury Research said in a morning note that the latest IMF cut “is just a confirmation of existing concerns of a slower 2019”.

The news hit investor sentiment, clipping gains in most Asian markets, with China and Hong Kong posting some of the biggest losses.

Local stocks fared no better.

The Straits Times Index began the day under water and sank further, before closing down 0.86 per cent, or 27.85 points, to 3,192.71.

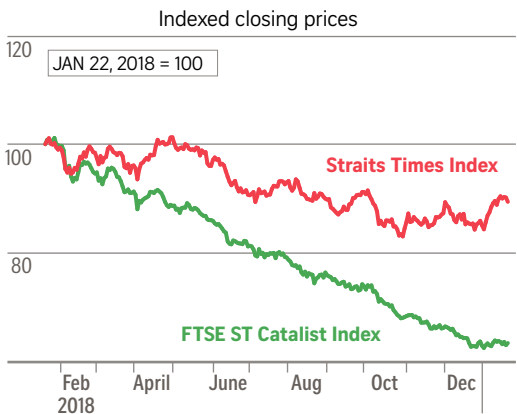
Losers outnumbered gainers 225 to 148 after 1.57 billion shares worth \$786.6 million changed hands.

“The Singapore market has already enjoyed an almost 5 per cent rise in three weeks. Some sideways movement is expected, especially with US equity futures pointing to some downside when it reopens,” said Phillip Securities research head Paul Chew.

Dragons on the index came from the manufacturing, transport, storage

### Straits Times Index

Jan 22, 2019  
**3,192.71** ↓  
-27.85 (-0.86%)  
Current streak  
**2 days**  
Day high  
**3,218.95**  
Day low  
**3,192.71**  
52-week high  
**3,615.28** (May 2, 2018)  
52-week low  
**2,966.45** (Oct 30, 2018)



### FTSE ST Catalyst Index

Jan 22, 2019  
**308.15** ↑  
+1.80 (+0.59%)  
Current streak  
**1 day**  
Day high  
**308.58**  
Day low  
**305.93**  
52-week high  
**490.47** (Jan 29, 2018)  
52-week low  
**303.76** (Jan 3, 2019)

### Indexed closing prices

JAN 22, 2018 = 100



### FTSE ST All-Share Index

Jan 22, 2019  
**773.78** ↓  
-5.90 (-0.76%)  
Current streak  
**2 days**  
Day high  
**779.34**  
Day low  
**773.78**  
52-week high  
**877.87** (Jan 24, 2018)  
52-week low  
**722.91** (Oct 30, 2018)

and communication sectors.

M1 fell 0.97 per cent to \$2.05 after Keppel Corporation and Singapore Press Holdings' joint venture entity said there would be no increase in its \$2.06 per share offer price for M1.

Singtel slid 0.66 per cent to \$3.02,

while StarHub slumped 1.11 per cent to \$1.78. In contrast, Netlink NBN Trust ended higher, up 0.65 per cent to \$7.5 cents.

Another exception was ComfortDelGro, which put on 0.46 per cent to \$2.19. KGI Securities noted that

institutional investors have been accumulating the stock at \$2.10 to \$2.30, with JPMorgan's Asean Equity fund the latest to add a significant stake to its portfolio. The fund added 2.37 million shares valued at \$3.7 million last month.

The index was also hurt by declines in financial counters.

DBS pared 1.84 per cent to \$24.55, while United Overseas Bank gave up 1.55 per cent to \$26.02. OCBC Bank posted the steepest decline, down 1.96 per cent to \$11.50.

Real estate investment trusts (Reits), which analysts have looked to as defensive plays in recent volatile times, were a mixed bag. Soilbuild Reit gained 2.48 per cent after posting higher fourth-quarter earnings on Monday. But Mapletree Logistics Trust, which also lifted earnings, ended flat.

OCBC analysts foresee more upside to come for the trust.

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### Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED/SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	271	unch	5847	5.9	1.3
194	161	CapitaCom Trust	183	unch	5709	4.7	1
388	298	Capitaland	327	-1	5218	3.7	0.7
238	195	CapitalMall Trust	227	+1	5880	4.9	1.1
1359	780	CityDev	890	+6	1636	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	219	+1	5065	4.7	1.8
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2455	-46	3149	5.8	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US943	-5	520	2.2	-
141	85.5	Genting Sing	109	-1	22717	3.2	1.7
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	26	unch	5598	3.1	0.6
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US25.5	unch	8724	10.3	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US693	-2	2762	2.9	0.3
6974	5580	JMH USD	US6685	+27	92	2.4	0.7
4149	3155	JSH USD	US3710	+24	506	0.9	0.4
4105	2766	Jardine C&C	3597	-49	409	3.2	1.7
892	567	Keppel Corp	617	-13	2656	3.6	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	617	-23	3754	3.2	1.2
581	455	SATS	481	-1	1473	3.7	3.3
8560	672	SGX	743	-1	1868	4	8.4
1184	914	SIA	961	-2	651	4.2	0.8
292	231	SPH	251	-1	2294	5.2	1.1
371	319	ST Engineering	366	unch	2730	4.1	5.4
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	165	-1	1951	1.2	1.5
365	283	Singtel	302	-2	10209	6.8	1.7
94	57.5	ThaiBev	73.5 cd	unch	26808	0.9	3.6
3037	2380	UOB	2602	-41	1676	3.8	1.3
934	591	UOL	660	-1	1038	2.7	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1534	+2	968	3.9	2
331	297	Wilmar Intl	322	-3	3307	3.1	0.9
164	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	134	-1	8842	3.4	0.1

### FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED/SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	271	unch	5847	5.9	1.3
127	105	Ascott Reit	115	unch	1058	6.2	0.9
77	59	Bumitama Agri	70.5	unch	396	1.1	1.6
185	143	CDL HTrust	157	+1	877	-	1.1
194	161	CapitaCom Trust	183	unch	5709	4.7	1
388	298	Capitaland	327	-1	5218	3.7	0.7
238	195	CapitalMall Trust	227	+1	5880	4.9	1.1
169	133	Capitaland China Tr	141	unch	1674	7.2	0.9
1359	780	CityDev	890	+6	1636	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	219	+1	5065	4.7	1.8
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2455	-46	3149	5.8	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US943	-5	520	2.2	-
78	59	Far East HTrust	63	unch	1591	-	0.7
197	150	First Resources	170	unch	264	4	2.2
236	211	Fraser's Cpt Tr	227 cd	+1	1568	5.3	109.1
117	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	108	+1	4184	6.3	1.2
141	85.5	Genting Sing	109	-1	22717	3.2	1.7
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	26	unch	5598	3.1	0.6
234	167	GuocoLand Ltd	185	-1	92	3.8	0.5
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US25.5	unch	8724	10.3	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US693	-2	2762	2.9	0.3
6974	5580	JMH USD	US6685	+27	92	2.4	0.7
4149	3155	JSH USD	US3710	+24	506	0.9	0.4
4105	2766	Jardine C&C	3597	-49	409	3.2	1.7
59	44.5	Keppel Infra Tr	51.5	-1	2139	7.2	1.8
892	567	Keppel Corp	617	-13	2656	3.6	1
132	108	Keppel Reit	117 cd	-1	2160	4.8	0.8
215	151	M1	205	-2	2620	5.6	3.8
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US189	unch	25	1.6	1.4
175	152	Mapletree Com Tr	173	-1	4695	5.2	1.2
213	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	198	-2	1833	5.9	1.3
138	118	Mapletree Log Tr	134 cd	unch	5795	5.7	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	120	+1	6103	6.2	0.9
8345	73	NetLink NBN Tr	77.5	+0.5	3031	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1150	-23	3754	3.2	1.2
215	136	OUF	147	unch	113	2	0.3
92.5	64.5	OUF HTrust	69.5	-1	683	-	0.9
250	157	Olam Intl	181	-2	299	4.1	0.9
60.8	28	Oxley	29.5	+0.5	2735	5.1	0.8
306	256	ParkwayLife Reit	272	+2	201	4.9	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	111	-3	649	2	2.6
581	455	SATS	481	-1	1473	3.7	3.3
850	672	SGX	743	-1	1869	4	8.4
1184	914	SIA	961	-2	651	4.2	0.8
337	220	SIA Engineering	252	-2	234	5.2	1.9
292	231	SPH	251	-1	2294	5.2	1.1
106	98	SPHREIT	102	unch	292	5.4	1.1
371	319	ST Engineering	366	unch	2730	4.1	5.4
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	165	-1	1951	1.2	1.5
281	149	Sembcorp Marine	165	-1	1951	1.2	1.5
58	39	Silverlake Axis	40	unch	2038	7.5	5.8
147	88.5	SingPost	98	-0.5	2655	3.6	1.3
365	283	Singtel	302	-2	10209	6.8	1.7
299	158	StarHub	178	-2	736	9	5.4
78	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	71	-0.5	1846	6.4	0.8
220	163	Suntree Reit	186	-1	5052	5.4	0.9
94	57.5	ThaiBev	73.5 cd	unch	26808	0.9	3.6
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.4 xe	unch	5417	-	2.7
3037	2380	UOB	2602	-41	1676	3.8	1.3
934	591	UOL	660	-1	1038	2.7	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1534	+2	968	3.9	2
331	297	Wilmar Intl	322	-3	3307	3.1	0.9
244	193	Wing Tai	203	-3	926	3.9	0.5
164	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	134	-1	8842	3.4	1
191	116	Yanlord Land	126	-1	1218	5.4	0.5

### FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	137	unch	59	7.5	1
71	48	Accordia Golf Tr	53	-1.5	477	7.3	0.6
90.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	81	-0.5	331	-	0.8
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	109	+1	863	5.6	1.3
58.5	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	12.8	-0.1	1993	50.8	0.2
65.5	48	Banyan Tree	58.5	unch	101	1.7	0.8
281	115	Best World	268	-4	2065	1.5	9.6
85.5	76	Boustead	80.5	+0.5	18	3.7	12
126	79.5	BreadTalk	89.5	unch	85	7.8	2.4
658	521	Bukit Sembawang	560	-3	12	3.2	1.1
88.5	65.5	Cache Log Trust	74	+0.5	1067	9.8	1.1
55	39.5	Centurion	40.5	-0.5	25	6.2	0.7
169	104	China Aviation	116	-3	967	3.9	1
47.5	29.5	China Everbright	35	-0.5	39	14	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunshine	127	-3	508	2.4	1.4
107	64	Chip Eng Seng	69.5	-0.5	1041	5.8	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	35	-1.5	2792	-	1.5
700	302	Delong	603	-2	0	-	0.6
28	17.5	Duty Free Intl	20.5 cd	unch	387	9	1.3
79	67.5	EC World Reit	71.5	-0.5	126	8.4	0.8
59.5	47	ESR-REIT	53 cd	unch	4643	7.3	1.1
142	92	First Reit	103 cd	+1	1045	8.3	1
155	134	Fraser's Com Tr	145 cd	-1	310	6.6	0.9
82.5	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	71.5	unch	155	-	0.9
27.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	20	+0.1	3282	5	12
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	79.5	+0.5	54	2.9	2.4
69	52	Health Mgt Intl	54	unch	60	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	91	-3	2879	27.5	1.4
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	263	+1	47	4.9	0.6
82.5	71	IREIT Global	74	-0.5	51	8	1
41.5	18.3	Indofood Agri	21	+1	844	-	0.2
79.5	43	Japfa	77	-0.5	1022	0.6	1.4
84.5	49	KSH	53	+0.5	53	4.2	0.9
86.9	53	Kep-KBS Reit USD	65	unch	205	-	0.5
148	128	Keppel DC Reit	144	+1	3124	4.9	1.4
188	132	Keppel T&T	187	-1	513	19	1.2
119	7	KrisEnergy	8.6	-0.2	7987	-	1
79.5	44.5	Lian Beng	51 xd	-1.5	198	4.4	0.4
42.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	21	-0.5	2625	16.4	0.8
53.5	30	MM2 Asia	35	unch	110	-	1.9
98.5	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	82.5	unch	91	6.7	0.7
120	95	Metro	99.5	unch	115	5	0.6
32	5	Noble	8.1	susp	-	-	-
66.9	45	ONE Com Reit	48	-0.5	1000	9.7	0.5
68	54	PEC	58	unch	25	3.4	0.6
46	17	POSH	18.9	+0.1	461	-	0.6
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	49.5	-	-	3.3	3.5
117	55.5	QAF Ltd	73.5	+4.5	726	6.8	0.8
83	70	RHT HealthTrust	77 cd	unch	2412	5.9	1
124	96	Riverstone	110	-1	29	2.1	3.6
55	22	SILC Environment	30	-0.5	233	-	0.5
45	38	Sabana Reit	41	-0.5	380	8.1	0.8
119	90	Sheng Siong	111	unch	251	3	6.1
25.5	10.3	Sino GrandReit	10.5	-0.6	1326	-	0.2
71	56	SoilbuildBizReit	62 cd	+1.5	1205	8.5	1
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	87	-0.5	43	-	0.7
50	32.5	Tuan Sing	39	unch	328	1.5	0.5
136	54	UMS	62.5	+0.5	2110	8	1.5
112	58.5	Valuetronics	69	-1	1546	6.6	1.5
17.8	8.3	Ying Li Intl	12.4	-0.2	6061	-	0.3
54	24	Yoma Strategic	36	-1	2902	0.7	0.9
37.5	16.1	Yongnam	17.9	+0.1	169	-	0.4



Grand Venture Technology executive chairman Ricky Lee says that the company is encouraged by the response to the IPO. The company has been growing its advanced machining capabilities since it was established in 2012, and has ventured into manufacturing analytical life sciences equipment. PHOTO: THE BUSINESS TIMES



# Grand Venture IPO raises \$13.2m; trading starts today

Home-grown manufacturer is SGX's first public listing this year

Ng Jun Sen  
Business Correspondent

Grand Venture Technology has started the listings ball rolling for 2019 with the year's first initial public offering (IPO). The home-grown manufacturer and services provider placed out 42.9 million new shares at 27.5 cents each, raising gross proceeds of around \$11.8 million.

The offer comprised a public tranche of 800,000 shares and a placement tranche of 42,118,000 shares, with all fully subscribed at the IPO's closing on Monday. The addition of the 5.095 million shares subscribed for by investment holding company Sunshine Power allowed Grand Venture to reach its \$13.2 million gross proceeds target. About \$10.9 million of this will be net proceeds. There were 288 applicants applying for around 12.5 million shares in the public tranche, making Grand Venture's IPO oversubscribed by 1.3 times overall, the group said in a statement yesterday.

Application funds received amounted to about \$3.4 million. The shares will begin trading today on the Catalist board. Grand Venture's executive chairman Ricky Lee, a technology industry veteran, said the company was encouraged by the positive response to the IPO. He said: "We see this as a vote of confidence to our prospects and growth plans. This will spur us on to execute our strategy and take Grand Venture to the next stage of growth." The company, which has facilities in Singapore, Penang and Suzhou, China, has been growing its ad-

vanced machining capabilities since it was established in 2012, and has also ventured into manufacturing analytical life sciences equipment. Its business has diversified into providing a broad range of precision engineering, assembly, testing, and product life cycle management solutions. The IPO was managed by CIMB Bank Singapore, while CGS-CIMB was the underwriter and placement agent. Grand Venture's market capitalisation is now expected to be about \$64.4 million, up from \$58.6 million at the time of the offer.

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## Company Briefs

### Keppel DC Reit

Keppel DC Reit has posted a fourth-quarter distribution per unit of 1.85 Singapore cents, up 5.7 per cent from 1.75 Singapore cents in the same period a year earlier. Gross revenue in the three months ended Dec 31 jumped 30.5 per cent to \$48 million. Gross rental income was \$44.67 million, up 27.9 per cent from the same period a year earlier, lifted by the acquisitions of Keppel DC Singapore 5 and maincubes DC. These were partially offset by lower rental income from Keppel DC Singapore 1 as well as lower overseas contributions arising from less favourable exchange rates. Portfolio occupancy as at Dec 31 was 93.1 per cent, with less than 5 per cent of the leases due for expiry per year until end-2020. Portfolio weighted average lease expiry was 8.3 years. Net asset value per unit (excluding the distributable income) was \$1.03 at the end of last year, up from \$0.93 at the end of 2017.

### Sanli Environmental

Water and waste management engineering group Sanli Environmental has clinched \$51.5 million worth of contracts from national water agency PUB, bringing its order book to \$185.9 million, it announced yesterday. The orders comprise a \$51 million engineering, procurement and construction contract relating to the replacement of mechanical and electrical equipment at Kranji Water Reclamation Plant, and \$500,000 for maintenance services at the same plant.

### Oxley Holdings

A subsidiary of property developer Oxley Holdings has entered into an agreement with Ireland's central bank to sell off two blocks of buildings in Dublin for €204 million (\$\$315 million), subject to finalisation of the properties' net floor area. The deal involves the sale of No. 4 and No. 5 Dublin Landings for €97 million and 72-80 North Wall Quay for €107 million. Oxley Holdings' wholly owned subsidiary, Oxley Docklands Quay Two, will be entitled to 79.5 per cent of the sale price, Oxley said on Monday in a Singapore Exchange filing. A deposit of €20.4 million has been paid, of which €5 million will be released to Oxley Docklands upon fulfilment of various conditions, the company said. The balance will be paid upon completion of the sale after the properties have been constructed. This is targeted for October this year.

# S'pore-based firm aims to power clean energy projects in S-E Asia

A new Singapore-based firm has set out to build and run clean energy projects across the region. CleanGrid Partners was unveiled yesterday as a collaboration by Singapore's WEnergy Global, consultancy ICMG Partners and energy firm Greenway Grid Global, which is backed by Japanese electricity giant Tokyo Electric Power Company's Tepco PowerGrid. The investment entity has US\$60 million (\$\$82 million) in the kitty, with each partner putting up an equal share and US\$20 million earmarked for short-term deployment. It aims to build up a portfolio of electrification projects worth US\$100 million in South-east Asia within four years. WEnergy Global's flagship micro-grid project on the Philippine

island of Palawan, which electrifies households and commercial players through hybrid power sources such as solar and diesel, is now part of the joint-venture plan, according to a statement. CleanGrid Partners plans to replicate its Palawan project in other parts of South-east Asia to meet demand for off-grid power. Other schemes are already planned for Indonesia and Myanmar, as well as the Philippines. The firm will also target industrial estates in Singapore. WEnergy Global chief executive Atem Ramsundersingh said in a statement that the latest move is a response to the chronic lack of access to electricity in parts of the region. "The near-term solution that delivers on immediate, on-the-

ground benefits is to build, own and operate smart microgrids for off-grid electrification, which most multilateral agencies, investment companies and mega power companies are reluctant to embark on," he said. "Our new partnership will combine WEnergy Global's on-the-ground knowledge and pioneer experience in Asean with the best smart technologies that the likes of Tepco PowerGrid already own." Mr Gen Funahashi, director of ICMG Partners, said that "investors, development and commercial banks and technology manufacturers worldwide must address the challenge to electrify the one billion people on our planet, including 100 million people in South-east Asia, who have little or no access to electricity".

## Interbank currency rates

Currencies	Against \$S		Against \$US	
	Bid	Offer	Bid	Offer
SG\$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9692	0.9699	0.7123	0.7125
Canadian dollar	1.0199	1.0205	0.7497	0.7495
Euro	1.5445	1.5458	1.1351	1.1356
NZ dollar	0.9138	0.9147	0.6716	0.6720
Sterling pound	1.7505	1.7513	1.2865	1.2866
US dollar	1.3607	1.3612	-	-
SG\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	19.9865	19.9953	14.6884	14.6895
Danish kroner	20.6869	20.6976	15.2031	15.2054
Hong Kong dollar	17.34	17.35	12.7450	12.7455
Indian Rupee	1.90	1.91	1.3998	1.4000
Indonesia rupiah	0.0096	0.0096	0.0070	0.0070
Japanese yen	124.38	124.46	0.9141	0.9143
Korean won	0.1201	0.1204	0.0883	0.0884
Malaysian ringgit	3.291	3.294	2.41838	2.42014
New Taiwan dollar	4.3994	4.4053	3.2332	3.2364
Norwegian krone	15.8287	15.8401	11.6328	11.6368
Philippine peso	25.700	25.715	1.8888	1.8891
Saudi riyal	36.2776	36.2948	26.6610	26.6638
Swedish krona	15.0478	15.0584	11.0589	11.0626
Swiss franc	136.3974	136.5022	100.2406	100.2808
Thai Baht	4.2722	4.2765	3.1397	3.1417

## Government securities

GOVERNMENT BONDS		Jan 22		Jan 22		Jan 22	
Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	High	Day's Low	Low
2-Year	NV05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	101.96	101.97	101.96	
5-Year	NX13100H	2.750%	01-Jul-23	102.86	102.86	102.85	
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	103.33	103.30	103.15	
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	110.73	110.85	110.60	
20-Year	NZ16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	95.89	96.08	95.90	
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	101.81	101.95	101.60	

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

## MSCI INDICES

Jan 21	Index	In local curr	
		%dy	%yr
World Preliminary	1529.0	0.0	6.1
EAFE Preliminary	1057.6	0.1	4.9
Europe Preliminary	1474.3	-0.1	5.0
Australia	1185.6	0.2	3.9
Austria Preliminary	535.0	-1.0	7.4
Belgium Preliminary	983.2	-0.6	7.5
Canada Preliminary	1959.6	-0.2	7.0
Denmark Preliminary	7783.7	-0.1	5.1
Finland Preliminary	710.9	0.8	8.8
France Preliminary	1767.1	-0.1	3.1
Germany Preliminary	893.9	-0.5	5.9
Greece Preliminary	45.5	-0.2	4.8
India	1272.6	0.4	0.8
Indonesia	7474.9	-0.1	5.7
Ireland Preliminary	190.6	-0.4	6.3
Israel Preliminary	246.0	-0.3	6.7
Italy Preliminary	666.7	-0.4	7.2
Japan	938.5	0.6	5.1
Korea	634.4	0.1	5.0
Malaysia	586.4	0.0	0.8
Netherlands Preliminary	1517.1	0.0	4.1
New Zealand	139.8	0.5	5.3
Norway Preliminary	2958.6	0.0	6.2
Pakistan	394.6	1.9	10.6
Philippines	1365.4	-0.4	8.2
Portugal Preliminary	84.6	0.2	4.8
Singapore	1680.4	-0.3	5.4
Singapore Free	361.3	-0.3	5.4

Source: MSCI

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## NOTICES



"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever". Psalm: 23:6



### TAN CHENG LIM

Age: 79

was called home to be with the Lord on 21 January 2019, dearly missed by loved ones.

Wife: Tham Soo Nghoh

#### Daughters:

Julie  
Elaine

#### Son-in-law:

Mok Wing Chee

#### Grandchildren:

Sarah & Sean

#### and beloved relatives & friends

Wake is held at Chapel of the Resurrection, St. Joseph's Church (Bukit Timah), 620 Upper Bukit Timah Rd, Singapore 678116.

Nightly services will be held on 22 and 23 January 2019 at 8.00pm.  
Cortege will leave on 24 January 2019 at 12.30pm  
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 1.20pm.

*With special thanks to Wendy, Lydia, Mini and Sal, the wonderful medical team and staff at SGH, and the angel armies who have given the family so much love & support.*

*In celebration of the Lord's goodness and in thanksgiving for his life, all gifts gratefully received will be donated to Singapore Children's Society, Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home & the Tan Cheng Lim Research & Education Fund (Duke - NUS).*

### With Deepest Sympathy and Heartfelt Condolences to The Family of the Late



### Professor Tan Cheng Lim

Age: 79

**Emeritus Consultant**  
**Senior Consultant, Haematology / Oncology Service,**  
**KK Women's and Children's Hospital**  
**Adjunct Professor, Duke-NUS Medical School**  
**Adjunct Professor, NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine**

Prof Tan will be greatly missed. He was an inspiring mentor and leader, a trusted colleague, a friend to all, and a hope to countless patients.  
We honour his selfless sacrifices and his lasting legacy.

From

#### The Management and Staff of



*Om Namah Shivaya*

**Thangaiyah Kunjamal (Kaveri)**  
Age: 95  
Passed away peacefully on 21 January 2019  
She was loved & will be dearly missed by  
Husband: Late Thangaiyah Ponnusamy

<b>Sons:</b> T Subramaniam T Paneerselvam T Thiagarajan (deceased) T Mohan T Mathyvanan T Kalayvanan T Elankovan	<b>Daughters-in-law:</b> Sarathambal (deceased) Vanaroja (Shanti) Chitra (India) Sulochana Jayanthi Logambal Malar Vizhi
---	---

**Daughters:**  
Dhanalethimi  
Kalechelvi

**Sons-in-law:**  
S Ganesan (deceased)  
A Thiruselvan

**All Grandchildren, Great Grandchildren, In-laws, Relatives & Friends**  
Cortege will leave the residence on Wednesday, 23 January 2019 at 5.30pm from  
**BLK 84B TOA PAYOH LORONG 2, #06-303 S312084**  
for cremation at Mandai Crematorium, Hall 1 at 6.30pm.  
Home: 62500927 / Hp: 90283758 / 91818013

### With Deepest Sympathy & Heartfelt Condolences to Dr Elaine Tan on the demise of her beloved father



### DR TAN CHENG LIM

From:

**President and 26th Council  
College of Family Physicians  
Singapore**

### With Deepest Sympathies and Heartfelt Condolences to The Family of Our Late



### Adjunct Professor Tan Cheng Lim

**From the Dean, Staff and Students,  
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, and  
Head of Department and Staff,  
Department of Paediatrics,  
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine,  
National University of Singapore.**



**Yong Loo Lin  
School of Medicine**

### With Deepest Sympathy & Heartfelt Condolences to The Family of The Late



**PROFESSOR TAN CHENG LIM**  
SMA HONORARY MEMBER 2010  
SINGAPORE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

From

**President, Council and Members  
Singapore Medical Association**



**Singapore  
Medical  
Association**  
For Doctors, For Patients

*"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death  
of his saints." (Psalms 116:15)*



**Irene Chua Aik Neo**  
**Mrs Eric Lee Hock Chuan**  
Age: 93

Was called home to be with the Lord on  
22 January 2019. Dearly missed and fondly  
remembered by loved ones.

**Husband:** Eric Lee Hock Chuan (deceased)  
**Sister:** Amy Chua Eng Neo  
**Son:** Robert Lee Kim San  
**Daughter in law:** Grace Teo Lay Kheng  
**Grand-daughter:** Vera Lee Hui Yi  
**Cousin:** Alfred Low Beng Chuan  
**Nephews, Nieces & their spouses:**  
James Song & Shirley Seet  
Frederick Seet & Angel Ng  
Charles Seet & Frieda Lee

**And all other loved ones.**

Wake at 10B Braddell Hill, Braddell View Condominium,  
Singapore 579721.

Nightly services will be held at 8pm.  
Funeral service on Saturday 26 January 2019 at 10am,  
thereafter cortege leaves at 10.15am for Mandai  
Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 11am.



**SUGUMARAN S/O  
SUPPIAH**  
Age: 57

passed away peacefully  
on 21 January 2019.  
Dearly missed by family,  
relatives, friends &  
all loved ones.

He is resting peacefully  
at Blk 29 Tanglin Halt Rd  
#07-144 S(141029).

Cortege leaves on  
23 January 2019 at  
4.30pm for Mandai  
Crematorium Hall 4  
at 6.30pm.

**Tel: 90996643**  
**Revathi (Daughter)**

#### CORRIGENDUM

In the advertisement in  
The Straits Times on  
22/01/19 for the late  
Tan Ah Kiat (陈亚吉), the  
Granddaughter-in-law's  
name Dr Alyssa Lim Xin Hui  
should have been  
Dr Alyssa Lin Xin Hui.



**Athma Shanti Pooja**



**K SUKUMARAN**  
8 Aug 1934 - 10 Jan 2019

Our heartfelt thanks & appreciation to  
all our relatives and friends for their support & love.

**ATHMA SHANTHI POOJA**

will be held on Friday, 25 January 2019 at 7.15pm at the  
**Holy Tree Sri Balasubramaniyar Temple**  
at 10 Yishun Industrial Park A, S768772

Please accept this as a personal invitation.

**HP: 98306121**

### The family of the late



**Eric Chew Yee Teck, PBM**  
Departed on 17 January 2019

Wish to express their heartfelt thanks and appreciation  
to Ministers, all relatives, friends, colleagues, doctors,  
business associates and clan associations for their  
kind assistance, attendance, condolences, wreaths  
and contributions during their recent bereavement.

### 8th Anniversary In Loving Memory Of



**LIM CHYE KIM**  
Departed on 23 Jan 2011

*Dearest Dad,  
8 years have passed by.  
It seems like only yesterday  
that we were having  
our good times together.  
Miss the good old days.  
Deeply missed & always  
remembered by your  
dearest wife, children,  
grandchildren and  
all loved ones*

### THALAI THEVASAM 1st Anniversary In Loving Memory Of



**RAMANATHAN S/O  
RATNASAMY**

Departed on 3 Feb 2018  
Prayers will be held on  
23 Jan 2019 (Wed) at  
7.30pm at Geylang East  
Sivan Temple.

Please treat this as a  
personal invitation.

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BID TO END  
SEX ABUSE

South Korea launches year-long probe to form ‘national surveillance system’ in sports

SEOUL • South Korea will hold its largest-ever investigation into sexual abuse in sports, its human rights watchdog said yesterday, after an Olympic speed skating star accusing her former coach of abuse triggered a wave of similar accounts from athletes.

The inquiry will aim to address “systematic, sustained” abuse in sports, which had been hushed up

for generations by victims afraid of being banished from their sports, said Choi Young-ae, chairwoman of the National Human Rights Commission.

“We will conduct a fact-finding inquiry that will be the largest in scale ever,” Choi told a news conference.

A commission official said up to about 30,000 people – athletes from all sports, coaches, officials

and others – are likely to be interviewed over the course of the year-long investigation.

The #MeToo movement has taken off belatedly in male-dominated South Korea where discussion of sexual misconduct has long been considered taboo.

But the issue exploded in the world of sports after Shim Suk-hee, 21, accused her former coach, Cho Jae-beom, of sexual assault.

Cho, a former national short track speed skating coach, had already been convicted of assaulting the two-time Olympic champion – punching and kicking her during training – and jailed for 10 months in September last year.

In December, Shim made accusations of sexual abuse against him. Cho denied the accusation of sexual abuse, media cited his lawyer as saying.

Since then, more athletes from various sports, including judo and



archery, have come forward with accounts of assault and sexual abuse, media has reported.

Choi said that victims had, for too long, not spoken out because of a “results-centred culture focused on medals”.

An “independent, constant, national surveillance system” would be established to gather data, conduct inquiries, and educate officials on human rights, she said.

Investigators would look into cases without the requirement of an initial accusation, and would take measures including protection

for victims and refer cases quickly to police and prosecutors, a spokesman for the commission said.

President Moon Jae-in said last week that the spate of accounts of abuse was a shameful tarnish on South Korea’s “bright image as a sports powerhouse”, and called for a thorough investigation and strict punishments.

The commission, noting that it had carried out an investigation into abuse of student-athletes in 2008, said it would work to end a “nothing changes” culture. REUTERS

Shim Suk-hee (left) competing in the short track speed skating event at last year’s Winter Games in Pyeongchang. The South Korean’s accusation of sexual abuse against her coach led to his incarceration, while paving the way for more athletes with similar experiences to come forward. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

30,000

Number of people likely to be engaged in the comprehensive investigation.

Cardiff’s new striker Sala on board disappeared plane

LONDON • Floral tributes were left at the Cardiff City Stadium yesterday after it was reported that Emiliano Sala, their newly-signed striker, was on board an airplane that disappeared on Monday night while crossing the English Channel.

Sala, who moved from Ligue 1 side Nantes last Saturday for a club-record £15 million (\$\$26.3 million), had been due to attend his first training session with the Premier League club yesterday.

Ken Choo, the Bluebirds’ chief executive officer, yesterday issued an official statement in response, saying: “We were very shocked upon hearing the news that the plane had gone missing.

“We expected Emiliano to arrive last night into Cardiff and today was due to be his first day with the team. Our owner Vincent Tan and chairman Mehmet Dalman are all very distressed about the situation.

“We made the decision first thing this morning to call off training with the thoughts of the squad, management staff, and the entire club with Emiliano and the pilot.

“All of us at Cardiff would like to thank our fans, and the entire footballing family for their support at this difficult time. We continue to pray for positive news.”

French civil aviation authorities confirmed the 28 year old “was on board the plane” that departed from Nantes for the Welsh capital.

He was one of two passengers on the missing Piper Malibu plane, a small propeller-driven aircraft.

According to the British police, the plane disappeared from air traffic control radar, about 24km north of Guernsey, an island in the Channel, after “requesting descent”.

It is not known why the pilot wanted to land so far short of their destination, and the plane was flying at an altitude of 701 metres when it lost contact.

A search and rescue operation started on Monday evening before it was called off due to bad weather.

British and French helicopters and airplanes resumed the search yesterday but, at press time, there was still no trace of the plane.

John Fitzgerald, chief officer for the Channel Islands Air Search, a search and rescue service, told the Associated Press he was “not expecting anyone to be alive”.

He said: “I don’t think the (UK) Coast Guard are either. We just don’t know how it disappeared.”

Sala had earned his big-money move to English football’s top-flight after enjoying a rise to promi-



nence relatively late in his career.

At the point of his departure, the Argentinian, who did not play over the weekend, had been the joint-third highest goalscorer in the French league on 12 goals, trailing only Paris Saint-Germain’s Kylian Mbappe and Nicolas Pepe of Lille.

The striker, who is known for his old-fashioned physical play, which Nantes coach Vahid Halilhodzic claimed was the “sort you do not see much any more”, came through Bordeaux’s youth ranks after leaving his home province of Santa Fe.

Having spent his entire professional career playing in France,

Sala’s former clubs expressed their shock at the turn of events.

Nantes president Waldemar Kita said: “He was a polite, kind and adorable boy, loved by everyone. He was very respectful, very courteous. I am thinking about his family and all his friends.”

US Orleans, where he spent the 2012-13 season on loan, tweeted: “Sad news this morning, all our thoughts go to the relatives of Sala and to the relatives of the pilot.”

Sala’s last post on his Instagram account was on Monday, prior to his flight, saying a “final goodbye” to his former Nantes teammates.

The forward’s parents were also in anguish over his disappearance. His father, Horatio, told Argentinian TV’s Channel 5 News he was “worried and desperate”.

He said: “They are saying that the plane lost control in the Channel. I don’t know what could have happened. I am speechless.”

This could be the second air-related tragedy to hit the Premier League in a short span. Less than three months ago, Leicester owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha died when his helicopter crashed as it was leaving the stadium.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, NYTIMES



Emiliano Sala was the third-highest goalscorer in the French Ligue 1 with Nantes prior to his move to Cardiff City. Fans of his new club have placed daffodils outside the Premier League side’s stadium as a tribute.

PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



# RUSSIA ESCAPES WADA SANCTIONS

**But world doping body says it will act if any of the retrieved data had been tampered with**

MONTREAL • Russia will not face new penalties for missing the Dec 31 deadline to allow investigators access to the Moscow laboratory at the centre of alleged state-sponsored doping, the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) confirmed yesterday.

It said it would follow a road map for the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (Rusada) to keep its accreditation and would not suspend the body for the missed deadline.

“Several members of the (Executive Committee) voiced their disappointment that the deadline had

been missed, but agreed that no sanction in that regard should be imposed,” Wada president Craig Reedie said in a statement.

Earlier in the day, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov had expressed confidence, telling state news agency Tass that Moscow was “certainly expecting a positive outcome”.

Wada lifted a three-year ban on Rusada last September, but threatened to declare it non-compliant again if it was not granted access to the laboratory data by the end of last year. The deadline was not met

NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET

**If that review were to confirm tampering, the CRC would consider that to be extremely serious non-compliance and ... recommend Wada pursues the most stringent sanctions.**



**JONATHAN TAYLOR**, head of Wada's Compliance Review Committee.

because of disagreements over the equipment used in transferring the data, but Wada revealed last Thursday it had retrieved the data.

However, Reedie warned that although “significant progress” had been made in “resolving the Russian doping matter”, if it was determined that any of the data had been tampered with, Wada would take swift action.

Jonathan Taylor, who heads Wada's Compliance Review Committee (CRC), added: “If that review were to confirm tampering, the CRC would consider that to be extremely serious non-compliance and can be expected to recommend Wada pursues the most stringent sanctions.”

Russia has denied the existence

of state-sponsored doping in the country, but has acknowledged some shortcomings in its enforcement of anti-doping regulations.

Separately, former world champions Sergey Shubenkov and Maria Lasitskene were among 42 Russian athletes cleared to compete as neutrals in international competitions this year, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) said on Monday.

The IAAF added that the athletes, who were also afforded neutral status last year, had met their doping review board's “exceptional eligibility criteria” of training in an environment that passed the necessary anti-doping requirements.

The Russian Athletics Federation (Rusaf) has been suspended since

2015 over a report commissioned by Wada that found evidence of widespread, state-sponsored doping in the sport.

The IAAF said: “The participation of all these athletes as neutral athletes in international competition is still subject to formalities for eligibility under IAAF rules being completed and subject to acceptance of their entries by individual meeting organisers.”

Lasitskene has won the women's high jump at the last two world championships, while Shubenkov triumphed in the men's 110 m hurdles at the 2015 event.

This year's world championships will take place in Doha from Sept 27-Oct 6.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, DPA, REUTERS

## Ronaldo fined, not jailed for tax fraud

MADRID • Portugal and Juventus footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has admitted to committing tax fraud while playing for Real Madrid and agreed to pay an €18.8 million (\$29 million) fine after striking a deal with prosecutors and tax authorities in return for a 23-month suspended prison sentence.

Ronaldo, 33, had been accused of defrauding the authorities of €14.8 million in unpaid taxes between 2011 and 2014.

In 2017, Madrid's regional state prosecutor alleged that the player had used what it deemed to be a shell company in the Virgin Islands to “create a screen in order to hide his total income from Spain's tax office”.

It said Ronaldo intentionally did not declare income of €28.4 million related to image rights, and de-

clared only €11.5 million of earnings from 2011 to 2014 when his real income was almost €43 million.

The prosecutor also alleged that the forward falsely reported income as coming from real estate, which it said had greatly reduced his tax rate.

Ronaldo arrived in court in Madrid yesterday morning, wearing sunglasses and a black blazer while accompanied by his partner Georgina Rodriguez.

His request to enter the provincial court through an underground car park was denied.

“I am very well,” the five-time Ballon d'Or winner told reporters outside the court after the brief hearing.

The hearing came six months after Ronaldo agreed a deal that would see him spared jail if he paid fines totalling almost €19 million.

In Spain, a judge can suspend sentences of two years or less for first-

time offenders.

Meanwhile, the trial of Ronaldo's former Real teammate Xabi Alonso, also in court yesterday over accusations of tax fraud, was suspended, a court magistrate said.

Prosecutors were seeking a five-year jail sentence and a fine of €4 million for the Spaniard, who retired as a player in 2017, accusing him of defrauding the Spanish state of some €2 million between 2010 and 2012.

Alonso said he was confident he had not committed a crime and would have to wait while the magistrates evaluated his case.

“I'd be worried if I thought I had something to hide or something I didn't do right but, as that isn't the case, I am carrying on,” Alonso told reporters. THE GUARDIAN

\$29million

Fine Cristiano Ronaldo will pay, in return for a 23-month suspended prison sentence, for tax fraud he committed when he was still a Real Madrid player.



Cristiano Ronaldo arriving at the court hearing in Madrid yesterday along with his partner Georgina Rodriguez. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

South Korean players celebrate substitute Kim Jin-su's (kneeling) extra-time goal against Bahrain. The left-back's header sent the Koreans through to the quarter-finals with a 2-1 win. PHOTO: EPA-EFE



Asian Cup 2019

## Super-sub Kim sends below-par Koreans into last eight

DUBAI • Son Heung-min's South Korea needed an extra-time winner to beat world No. 113 Bahrain 2-1 yesterday as they stumbled into the Asian Cup quarter-finals in unconvincing fashion.

Substitute Kim Jin-su's diving header at the end of the first extra period proved the difference as the two-time champions met unexpected resistance in Dubai.

But Paulo Bento's side, runners-up in 2015 and one of the favourites for the title, survived to reach the last eight, where they will face Qatar or 2007 winners Iraq.

Tottenham Hotspur star Son took a boot to the head as he weathered some robust challenges in a first half South Korea dominated with 73 per cent of possession.

Bahrain gave the Koreans an early scare with Mohamed Marhoon's stinging shot, as the Asian powerhouses took time to settle into their rhythm.

Son then started to make his presence felt with some typically direct running which caused panic in the Bahrain defence.

South Korea broke the deadlock two minutes before half-time when

Son laid off to Lee Yong whose cross was parried by Bahrain goalkeeper Sayed Shubbar Alawi to Hwang Hee-chan, who duly converted the easy chance.

South Korea threatened to run riot after the break before Bahrain hit back and it took a magnificent stop from Kim Seung-gyu to keep out Jamal Rashed's effort.

And, against all expectations, Bahrain drew level with 13 minutes remaining, when Mohamed Al-Romaihi smashed in the rebound from Mahdi Al-Humaidan's shot.

Hwang Ui-jo nearly snatched the

victory in injury time when a defensive mix-up put him one on one with Alawi, but he spooned his shot wide to set up the additional 30 minutes of play.

South Korea's first goal had been their only shot on target, but they looked determined to put that right and substitute Lee Seung-woo should have done better when he was set up in the box by Son's strong run.

Bahrain goalkeeper Alawi withdrew with an apparent hamstring injury but, one of the first tasks for his replacement, Abdulkarim Far-

dan, was to pick the ball out of the net.

Left-back Kim found time and space to steady himself and drive home a header from Lee Yong's cross, a goal which the team celebrated by holding up the No. 16 shirt of injured Newcastle United midfielder Ki Sung-yueng.

Ju Se-jong also rammed a shot against the post in a positive finish for the Koreans and, while they celebrated their victory, there were tears from the Bahrainis at the final whistle.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## Young Lions pull out of AFF U-22 c'ship

Wang Meng Meng

The Football Association of Singapore (FAS) announced yesterday that the national Under-22 team will not be competing at next month's Asean Football Federation (AFF) Under-22 Youth Championship.

A packed schedule in the opening months of this year has meant that Fandi Ahmad's Young Lions are unable to commit to the regional competition.

FAS general secretary Yazeen Buhari said: “We have taken into account the quality of preparation and the availability of our young players. For this year, our focus will be on AFC (Asian Football Confederation) U-23 qualifiers in March and the Southeast-Asia Games in November.”

“In addition, centralised training camps are also being planned for as part of the team's preparations for these tournaments.”

The second edition of the AFF U-22 tournament will be held from Feb 17 to March 2 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The first edition was contested 14 years ago in 2005 before being revived again this year.

Singapore were originally drawn in Group B, alongside Malaysia, Myanmar, Indonesia and the host.

Fandi's team are currently in Kuala Lumpur for pre-season training to prepare for the upcoming Singapore Premier League season, which is set to kick off next month.

The team are also committed to the AFC U-23 Championship qualifiers from March 22-26.

Singapore are in Group G, alongside host Mongolia, North Korea and Hong Kong.

The top team in each of the 11 groups and the four best runners-up will join host Thailand in the finals to be played next year.

The top-three finishers at the U-23 finals will also qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

meng@sph.com.sg



SportsWorld

Woods to get under way at Farmers Open

LOS ANGELES • Former world No.1 Tiger Woods will make his first PGA Tour appearance of the season at tomorrow's Farmers Insurance Open alongside fellow American golfers Tony Finau and Xander Schauffele.

The 14-time Major winner, playing his first event since turning 43 last month, returns to the Torrey Pines course where he won the Californian event seven times and captured his last Major victory at the 2008 US Open. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Bellerin ruled out of Gunners' campaign

LONDON • Arsenal defender Hector Bellerin will be sidelined for six to nine months after suffering a cruciate knee ligament injury in their 2-0 Premier League win over Chelsea last weekend, multiple British media reports said yesterday.

Bellerin, who was making his first start in five weeks following a calf injury, was carried off the pitch on a stretcher in the second half.

The injury to the Spain international is another blow to manager Unai Emery, who had already lost defender Rob Holding for the rest of the season to the same injury early last month. REUTERS

New Barcelona boy eyes El Clasico goal

BARCELONA • Kevin-Prince Boateng has vowed to make the most of his shock arrival at Barcelona, after a loan move for the journeyman forward from Italian Serie A side Sassuolo was sealed on Monday.

The former Ghana international told reporters it was a "great chance" for him and said his aim was to score for Barcelona when they travel to Real Madrid for the Clasico on March 2.

The Spanish LaLiga champions have an €8 million (\$12.4 million) option to make the move permanent in the summer. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Burglars break into Pacquiao's LA home

LOS ANGELES • Manny Pacquiao's Los Angeles home was burglarised last weekend while he was in Las Vegas defending his World Boxing Association welterweight title with a convincing unanimous decision win over Adrien Broner, a member of his promotional company said.

His spokesman Fred Sternburg confirmed that the police were investigating the burglary at the boxer's residence in Hancock Park.

The Filipino also revealed he was on the mend after suffering a scratched cornea during the Broner bout. DPA



World No. 2 Rafael Nadal, serving to Frances Tiafoe, is delighted to reach the semi-finals of the Australian Open after trouncing the unseeded American 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 in Melbourne yesterday. The Spaniard has been plagued by injuries since withdrawing from his US Open semi-final in September last year. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Australian Open 2019

NADAL STORMS INTO SEMIS

Spaniard to meet Greek young gun Tsitsipas; Kvitova faces unseeded Collins in last four

MELBOURNE • Rafael Nadal stayed on course to become the third man to win all four Grand Slams twice and the first to do so in the Open era after trouncing unseeded Frances Tiafoe 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 in their quarter-final clash yesterday.

The 21-year-old American had announced his arrival at the Australian Open by beating South Africa's Kevin Anderson and Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov, but he was no match for the Spanish great.

Despite entering the tournament with injury doubts hanging over his head after not playing on the ATP Tour since pulling out of his US

Open semi-final in September last year, the world No. 2 has been at the peak of his powers so far.

But post-game, a delighted Nadal, who has yet to drop a set, felt that he was "lucky to be where I am" after having "some trouble at this event all my career".

The 32-year-old will take on another young gun in Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas, 20, in the last four tomorrow. He revealed reaching "the semi-final without playing for a while" meant "everything to me".

There will also be a new women's world No. 1 after Czech Petra Kvitova ended the hopes of the host na-

tion by thrashing Ashleigh Barty 6-1, 6-4 to reach her first Grand Slam semi-final in five years.

Romania's Simona Halep had held the ranking for 48 consecutive weeks, but will be dislodged from the summit following Kvitova's win. Depending on the progress of compatriot Karolina Pliskova, who takes on Serena Williams in the last eight today, and Japan's Naomi Osaka and Ukrainian Elina Svitolina, who also meet in the quarter-finals, Kvitova is in contention to become the top women's player when the rankings are updated after the tournament.

But the 28-year-old, who has not lost a set at Melbourne Park, claimed she "did not really care" about the four-way scramble as her sole focus was on lifting her third

Slam and her first since 2014.

The two-time Wimbledon champion, who will face unseeded American sensation Danielle Collins tomorrow for a place in the final, was emotional in her on-court interview at the Rod Laver Arena.

Recalling her struggle to regain her place among the sport's elite following an attack by a knife-wielding home intruder in December 2016 that put her career in doubt, Kvitova said it "felt great" as she "did not imagine to be back at this great stadium with the best".

She added: "Yeah, it just took me a bit to the tears, but it was happy tears. I always wanted to come back and play on the highest level... I'm calling it my second career."

Collins also admitted to sharing similar self-doubts as her last-four

opponent, telling reporters that having "gone a different route", she "wasn't sure if I could make it playing tennis".

After beating Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 2-6, 7-5, 6-1 to continue her giant-killing run, the 25-year-old Australian Open debutante joked "it's a little bit new to me" but said being a late bloomer made her "hungrier in some ways".

She added: "This time last year, I was playing a challenger in Newport Beach. I'm really embracing it."

"Not being a child prodigy certainly humbled me, made me, in a way, work harder for things." AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Day 10: Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 8am & 4.30pm

SportingLife

A new age for tennis deserves original new heroes



Rohit Brijnath

Assistant Sports Editor  
In Melbourne

Vicky Georagatou is not just a person any more, she has become The Tsitsipas Information Gazette. In the media room in Melbourne, she is constantly being pestered for a quote on him, a story, an anecdote. BBC radio is calling, German radio, the Australian Open website, The Straits Times.

Hey, Vicky, does Stefanos really quote Aristotle, in Greek, on his Twitter feed?

Yes. Er, can you translate? Georagatou is the only Greek reporter at the Open and she's been answering questions while filing five stories a day for nine days on tennis' latest heart-throb. Even she's surprised because tennis isn't usually headline news in Greece, yet in the 24 hours surrounding his defeat of Roger Federer her website, sdna.gr, ran 38 Tsitsipas stories.

Now the unshaven Greek, who beat the stoic Roberto Bautista Agut 7-5, 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7-2) yesterday, is in the semi-finals and you sense this is the first page of a long story. He's like Naomi Osaka, a new hero for a new time. If she, as TIME magazine put it on their cover, is The Heir, then he - cheap joke alert - is The Hair. He even got asked about it yesterday. "It's my trademark," he grinned.

Tsitsipas is a 1.93m wind of change and I felt it when an old pal who lives in Melbourne told me he shed no tears for the fallen Federer. Respect endures for the Swiss but my friend is ready for renewal, for the video-making Tsitsipas and the self-deprecating, amusing Osaka.

The Japanese fell during a point the other day and the umpire asked: "Are you okay?"

"I was," she said, "but I wanted to see his reaction if I said 'no'" and so

she did. The audience howled.

There's a becoming innocence to these emerging stars and we are drawn to their unpolished beauty and unspoiled spontaneity. Osaka has walked around Melbourne, unrecognised she said, and then added, as if trying to remind us she's a tennis-playing human not an athletic God: "I just walk around and everyone's normal. I am normal too."

In time they might prefer the insular star life in an air-conditioned bubble where someone ensures their water on a private jet is chilled to the right degree, but that hasn't come yet. For now there's only promise and possibility. "Feels like a fairy tale almost," said Tsitsipas. Both these athletes wear an unaffected air. If they are interesting people it may be because they are interested people. Osaka takes pictures on her travels and posts them on Instagram under a lesser-known account, nao.chiii, while Tsitsipas make videos of his wanderings and has a YouTube channel. By day's end, much like his fame, his subscribers had multiplied.

"When I'm desperate sometimes," he said later, "when I feel down, I do these videos (and) I actually feel better. It makes me realise that tennis is not the most important thing in life, that we all have some other talents that we don't know about."

The Greek looks like a rock poet with a degree in cool which is probably why he frequently picks up time violations. He also posts photographs, under the Instagram handle stevethehawk, and it sounds as if Bob Dylan is doing the captioning.

Under a picture of a New York



Japanese Naomi Osaka and Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas are new types of athletes who bring new audiences, who relate differently, who aren't mainstream folk but adventurers. PHOTO: REUTERS

clock it reads: "Unfortunately the clock is ticking, the hours are going by. The past increases, the future recedes. Possibilities decreasing, regrets mounting." This is a different, expressive, atypical style of sporting hero and it's no surprise than in a jock-filled locker room he has few friends.

Osaka is fascinating in her own way. She has a Japanese mother, a Haitian father, a German-born coach, an American address but no one passport or gene pool defines her. She is claimed by Asians, speaks English, makes money in Japan, but she transcends nations and continents and in fact speaks for more important tribes.

She is a hero for immigrants, for

those of mixed-race, for the outsider, for the transplanted. As a Vietnamese-American friend tells me: "When I hear Naomi talk I think, 'that's me at home'. My parents speak to me in their native language and I answer in English."

We need more than new champions in a new world, we need new types of champions. Athletes who bring new audiences, who relate differently, who aren't mainstream folk but adventurers. Tsitsipas insisted that "it's important to stay who you are, not think too much of yourself" but fame, he might realise, squeezes originality out of people.

He's probably not ready to win this Open but the Tsitsipas effect has already begun. Corny wordplay has been unleashed - tsilly, tsuperb, tsemi-final - and Greek history books are being dusted off. Already we're mining Aristotle for quotes, stalking Socrates, befriending Homer and wondering how to use Hoplite spears in a sentence. If he conquers in the future we'll call him Alexander and if he swells with conceit we will pull out Icarus.

Is he ready for this? Because we are for him.

rohitb@sph.com.sg

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS				
Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Wed, 23 Jan 2019				
A League	Wellington	Sydney FC	2.35pm	LW
A League	Newcastle Jets	Central Coast	4.50pm	LW
A League	Perth Glory	Adelaide	7.00pm	LW
Thu, 24 Jan 2019				
French Cup	St Etienne	Dijon	1.30am	LW*
English League Cup	Burton Albion	Manchester City	3.45am	LW*
French Cup	Paris SG	Strasbourg	4.05am	LW*

LW\* : Telecast available at Livewire(Marina Bay Sands) only  
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LOTTERY	
<b>TOTO</b> Mon, 21 Jan 2019 Draw No. 3442/2019	
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Sold at: 1. NTUC FairPrice Sengkang East, Bldg 279 Sengkang East Avenue #01-06 (One Quick Pick Ordinary Entry)	
Draw No. 3443/2019 Next Draw Thu, 24 Jan 2019 Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994	Group 1 Prize <b>\$1,000,000</b> est.

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# SPORT

## ICONS TO PERFORM IN S'PORE ON APRIL 5

Harlem Globetrotters will thrill fans at Indoor Stadium, the sole S-E Asian stop of world tour

David Lee

For more than nine decades, they have entertained hundreds of millions of fans, among them popes, kings, queens and presidents – including then Singapore President Wee Kim Wee in 1991 – with their iconic brand of entertaining basketball.

On April 5, the Harlem Globetrotters will thrill fans in Singapore again with their slam dunks, well-choreographed routines and mesmerising skills at the Singapore Indoor Stadium as part of their 2019 Fan Powered World Tour.

They will play the Washington Generals, who are part of their travelling crew. The Globetrotters last visited the Republic in 2009.

Following the team's tour of Australia last year, Australian National Basketball League owner and executive director Larry Kestelman said he was delighted to continue expanding the Globetrotters' partnership with Singapore.

He said: "The Harlem Globetrotters have entertained millions of people all over the world for 93 years, and we are excited to bring them to Singapore for their only show in South-east Asia.

"We are in the business of delivering great family entertainment and the Harlem Globetrotters are just that. This is an event not to be missed."

Formed in Chicago in 1926, the Globetrotters were a force to be reckoned with as they popularised the fast break, and forward and point guard positions, and even won the World Professional Basketball Tournament in 1940, before the event was discontinued after the 10th edition in 1948.



Over time, as they worked comic routines into their act, they became known for entertainment.

These days, they take their unique basketball skills and wizardry worldwide to the delight of millions of fans, entertaining families and breaking down barriers and social divides in 123 countries across six continents.

They also raise funds for multiple charity organisations.

They currently hold 21 Guinness World Records, having set five new records on Guinness World Records Day last year, including Cherelle "Torch" George's most basketball under-the-leg tumbles in one minute (32) – their first record

set by a female player.

George is only the 16th female player in their history, and they also feature other stars such as 2.06m Nathaniel "Big Easy" Lofton, Shane "Scooter" Christensen, Angelo "Spider" Sharpless and the 1.57m Jonte "Too Tall" Hall.

Basketball fan Gerald Chua said: "I have seen their antics only on YouTube and they always have some awesome tricks in their high-energy performances.

"I never thought they would visit Singapore, so my friends and I would definitely be interested to watch them live here."

Tickets to the Harlem Globetrotters 2019 Fan Powered World Tour,

which start from \$29, are available to the general public from 10am tomorrow at [www.harlemglobetrotters.sg](http://www.harlemglobetrotters.sg). Family packages (two adults and two juniors) are also available.

Ticket holders can also upgrade their tickets with a Magic Pass, which allows them to go on court for a 30-minute pre-show exclusive interactive experience with the players.

[davidlee@sph.com.sg](mailto:davidlee@sph.com.sg)

**SCAN TO WATCH**  
Harlem Globetrotters coming to Singapore.

Harlem Globetrotters' 1.35m guard Jahmani "Hot Shot" Swanson after a dunk. The Globetrotters, who were last here in 2009, will play the Washington Generals, who are part of their travelling crew, on April 5.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS



# 32

Record under-the-leg basketball tumbles Cherelle George managed in one minute. It is one of 21 Guinness World Records the Harlem Globetrotters hold.

## On-fire Thompson guns down Lakers with a vengeance

LOS ANGELES • Shorn of LeBron James, Rajon Rondo and Lonzo Ball, the Los Angeles Lakers had no defence for the long-range bombardment from the "Splash Brothers".

Except, it was mainly Klay Thompson doing the damage from beyond the arc, equalling two National Basketball Association records by connecting on his first 10 three-point attempts of the game on Monday.

His partner in crime, Stephen Curry, was uncharacteristically off-

colour, going just two-of-10 from long range for 11 points as his nine-game streak of at least three three-pointers ended, but the Golden State Warriors could afford to shrug it off with Thompson on fire.

The four-time All-Star scored 23 of his 44 points in the third quarter, finishing with his 13th career game of at least 40 points, and made 10 or more three-pointers for the fifth time in his career as the two-time defending champions romped to a 130-111 win over the Lakers.

According to Elias Sports Bureau research, Ty Lawson set the game-opening mark on April 9, 2011, which Thompson matched, while still playing for the Denver Nuggets.

The guard also joined Chandler Parsons, then of the Houston Rockets, in making 10 three-pointers in a game.

Thompson, however, downplayed his feat as it "just happened to be one of those nights". He told ESPN: "It was the best percentage I ever shot. It's hard to explain."

Recalling the last time they visited the Staples Centre, which ended in a 127-101 blowout win for the home team on Christmas Day, Thompson revealed the West-leading Warriors (33-14) had gained a measure of revenge with their rout.

"It definitely had an effect," he said. "I will say, one thing about this game is we play these guys four times. You do have to have a short memory because it's such a long season but, when it's a beat-down like that, you're going to remember it."

DeMarcus Cousins, who had eight points in his second Warriors game after a year out with a heel injury, lauded his teammate for setting "a new record every day". The four-time All-Star said: "That's Klay. We're all used to it now. It was 10 straight? That's impressive."

It was the Warriors' seventh consecutive road victory and their eighth overall, and coach Steve Kerr felt the Lakers were just another victim once Thompson gets "red hot, white hot".

"Klay does that five or six times a season," he said. "You guys have seen it."

The Lakers were without their three best playmakers, all out injured. James and Rondo missed their 14th straight game while Ball, who sprained his ankle last Saturday, will miss the next four weeks.

The trio have combined to average 19.2 assists this season, and Los Angeles are now 5-9 in the absence of James and Rondo, dropping to 25-23 overall. REUTERS

## Kohli first to sweep top three awards in cricket

NEW DELHI • India captain Virat Kohli declared he was "very, very happy" after becoming the first player to clinch the sport's top-three honours, including Cricketer of the Year, at the International Cricket Council (ICC) awards ceremony yesterday.

Kohli, who earlier this month led his country to its maiden Test and one-day series triumph in Australia, was also voted the Test and One-Day International (ODI) Men's Player of the Year as the governing body announced its annual honours, chosen by former players and veteran journalists.

"It feels amazing. It's a reward for

all the hard work that you do throughout the calendar year," he said.

"I feel really grateful with the team doing well at the same time (as) myself performing."

Kohli was also picked to skipper the ICC Test and ODI Teams of the Year for the second year running.

The 30-year-old, who is married to Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma, enjoys superstar status in cricket-mad India after first coming into the limelight when he led the national team to victory at the 2008 Under-19 World Cup.

He was the top Test and ODI batsman last year, scoring 1,322 Test



India captain Virat Kohli holding the one-day international series trophy after defeating Australia in Melbourne earlier this month. PHOTO: REUTERS

runs at an average of 55.08 – including five centuries – and 1,202 runs at 133.55 in ODIs, with six centuries, while also scoring 211 runs in 10 Twenty20 matches.

Kohli had been the unanimous choice for Cricketer of the Year and is only the second player after Australian great Ricky Ponting (2006-07) to retain the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy.

Calling him an "extraordinary talent", ICC chief executive David Richardson said: "This is (a) well-deserved recognition. His regard for the game and particularly for Test cricket is also recognised and appreciated.

"He is passionate in his support of the longest form of the game and its continued importance."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

### Next 48 Hours

#### TODAY

##### BASKETBALL

ABL Mono Vampire v Saigon Heat (4.30pm), Westports Malaysia Dragons v Hong Kong Eastern (8pm) – StarHub Ch202.

##### FOOTBALL

English League Cup Semi-final, 2nd leg: Burton v Man City (Singtel TV Ch111 & StarHub Ch202, tomorrow, 3.45am)

##### TENNIS

Australian Open Day 10 (Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 8am & 4.30pm).

#### TOMORROW

##### BASKETBALL

ABL Macau Black Bears v Formosa Dreamers (StarHub Ch202, 8pm).

##### GOLF

European Tour Desert Classic: Day 1 (StarHub Ch204, noon).

##### FOOTBALL

Asian Cup Q-finals: Japan v Vietnam (9pm), China v Iran (11.55pm) – Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209. English League Cup Semi-final, 2nd leg: Chelsea v Tottenham (Singtel TV Ch111 & StarHub Ch202, Friday, 3.45am).

##### TENNIS

Australian Open Day 11 (Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 8am & 4.30pm).



# life

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## Eye spy

**Vincent Chang** sizes up the smartest  
home security cameras on the market  
and gives the low-down. **D2&3**

DESIGN: SALLY LAM PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO, DISCOVERY CHANNEL



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# Keep a smart eye on your home

Here are five things to look out for when setting up a home security camera system



Keeping an eye on your home and loved ones at home – the young, the elderly, or pets – has never been easier. The new breed of consumer security cameras are designed to be as user-friendly as home appliances.

## Arlo Pro 2 impresses but at a price

More than three years ago, I tested the Arlo security camera. It had no wires as it was powered by batteries. This meant it could be used outside the house, as long as it was within range of the home Wi-Fi network. That first Arlo camera and the ones that followed it were apparently successful enough that the brand, created by the young firm Netgear, was spun off last month to be an independent company. Launched last year, the Arlo Pro 2 security camera retains the key features of the previous versions, such as being wire-free and weather-proof (IP65 certified against dust and rain). An indoor power adapter is included too.

The newer model improves the video resolution from 720p to 1080p. In addition, it supports continuous video recording (CVR) with a paid monthly subscription of \$13.99 a month a camera. You can also define an area in the Arlo Pro 2's field of view to monitor for activity, which was not possible with its predecessor. The review set comes with two cameras and includes a base station that connects to the router via Ethernet cable. The base station has a siren that is more than 100 decibels loud and can be triggered automatically or manually. Also found on the base station is a USB connection, which allows users to plug in a storage device and make a local copy of all the videos captured. Short video snippets are recorded when motion is detected by the camera or when a user manually starts a recording. Footage is automatically uploaded to the cloud – this motion-triggered video service is free for up to five cameras and the videos are stored for up to a week. Storage in the cloud is capped at 1GB. You can upgrade this service by paying a monthly subscription conveniently through the Arlo mobile app. Since Arlo mostly sells its cameras bundled with the base station, I was surprised that the cameras are not pre-paired with the base station out of the box.

Gone are the clunky user interfaces and convoluted set-ups of older models, replaced by sleek mobile apps that can configure cameras by simply scanning a QR code. These cameras are also mostly connected to the Internet, allowing you to check your home from a smartphone anywhere in the world. And they are becoming increasingly intelligent. "Home security cameras have evolved from peace-of-mind devices, allowing users to view the nanny or a pet, to advanced pieces of technology that include facial recognition and object detection," says Mr Blake Kozak, principal analyst for smart home and security at

market research firm IHS Markit. He expects future security cameras to come in even more diverse forms, such as being embedded in light bulbs and light fixtures. They will also add features such as 4K video capture and video analytics to recognise faces and detect objects. Here are some things to consider when choosing a new security camera.



## THE STRAITS TIMES TECH EDITOR'S CHOICE

I encountered a problem with adding a camera to the base station using the Arlo app. This syncing issue was resolved only when I changed the router. Video quality is top-notch and its 8x digital zoom lets you focus closely on your point of interest. The cameras have night vision using infrared LEDs, as well as two-way audio through its microphone and speaker. Besides manually enabling the cameras' motion-detection feature (arming the camera so to speak) using the app, you can also set a schedule for when the camera is active. Geofencing is also supported, so you can have the camera become active when you (and your smartphone) leave your home. Notifications are sent to your smartphone – or you could have them sent via e-mail. All these features make Arlo cameras one of the best in the market. But the firm is not done yet – it recently introduced Arlo Smart, an add-on service which introduces more advanced features – powered by artificial intelligence – for an additional monthly fee (from \$3.99 a camera a month). Arlo Smart can distinguish humans, animals and vehicles from other motion triggers, like a ceiling fan, so you only receive real-time alerts for important happenings like a family member returning home. Another useful Arlo Smart feature is package detection. Users will be alerted if an Arlo camera, located at the porch or doorway, spots what it thinks is a parcel. To improve this

feature, which is in beta testing, Arlo is asking users to contribute videos showing parcels at the doorstep through the app. Also, Arlo offers three different types of monthly fees – CVR, motion-triggered cloud-based video recordings and the Arlo Smart add-on service. The fees for these services add up too.

• **Verdict:** A security camera that does it all, but at a price.

Vincent Chang	
<b>SPECS</b>	
PRICE:	\$899 (2-camera pack), \$1,199 (3-camera pack), \$1,399 (4-camera pack)
VIDEO RESOLUTION:	Up to 1920 x 1080 pixels
VIDEO FORMAT:	H.264
FIELD OF VIEW:	130 degrees
NIGHT VISION:	Up to 7.62m
MOTION DETECTION:	Yes
MOBILE APPS:	iOS and Android
WEIGHT:	136g
<b>RATINGS</b>	
FEATURES:	5/5
DESIGN:	4.5/5
PERFORMANCE:	4/5
VALUE:	3/5
OVERALL:	4.5/5



outsights of a large compound. In cases where Wi-Fi is weak or unavailable, consider models that also support cellular connectivity via a SIM card slot, such as the Arlo Go camera.

**POWER SOURCE**  
Wired security cameras need an electrical outlet nearby or extra cabling. In contrast, newer battery-powered cameras from Arlo and Blink offer more flexibility on where to place them. But such wire-free cameras do need to be recharged periodically, which, depending on the usage, could be once every few weeks or every couple of months.

**LOCAL OR CLOUD STORAGE**  
Security cameras used to store their videos locally in a memory card or hard drive, but many cameras now upload their recorded videos to an online server. These video clips can be easily shared with others through a URL, or downloaded to your phone and other devices. With cloud storage, there is zero chance of an intruder tampering with the camera and removing the memory card. But cloud-connected cameras incur bandwidth and storage costs, so they are primarily designed to start recording only when motion is detected. Manufacturers also typically

charge monthly fees for cloud storage, though some have a basic, free storage plan that may suffice for home users. Some, like Arlo, have continuous video recording (CVR) plans where the cameras are constantly recording and uploading to the cloud, but these plans usually costs more.

**SMART HOME FEATURES**  
Many security cameras, especially from manufacturers that also make smart home devices, can be integrated into a smart home system. For instance, they can be turned on to take a video or a photo when certain conditions are met, such as when a smoke detector gets a whiff



## D-Link camera is feature-packed yet affordable

D-Link is a household name when it comes to inexpensive home security cameras, but its software often leaves much to be desired. The Taiwanese firm tackled this issue last year with a new mydlink mobile app (for iOS and Android) that ties together its growing range of smart home devices.

Setting up D-Link's latest Wi-Fi camera (DCS-8300LH) with the mydlink app was as simple as scanning a QR code located at the bottom of the camera. A few taps later and the camera was connected to my home Wi-Fi network and streaming a live video feed to my Android smartphone. But while D-Link has spruced up the look of its app, the interface is still not the most intuitive. My tip to D-Link do not offer more than one way of accessing the same settings because it merely confuses users. To be fair, the app is more complex than a basic camera app because it is a one-stop smart home app to control D-Link's smart plugs, sensors and cameras.

In other words, the DCS-8300LH can be part of a smart home scene. For instance, a bedtime scene could involve turning off smart lights and enabling the camera's motion detection feature. You do not need to have any other D-Link smart home devices to use the DCS-8300LH in smart home automations, as it supports the popular IFTTT smart home service that works with many third-party smart home devices. The camera has to be connected to the electrical outlet and is intended to be used indoors. It can be mounted to the wall. Its wide-angle (137-degree) lens can cover a typical living room in an apartment. It shoots full-HD videos that are sharp, albeit slightly dimmer than the Arlo cameras. It works well in the dark, too, thanks to its infrared LEDs. In addition, it has both motion and audio detection capabilities. You can adjust the sensitivity of the motion detection, as well as the

field of view that the camera should focus on (such as a doorway) to reduce false alarms. Upon detecting motion, the app can send a notification on your smartphone while the camera automatically records 15 seconds of footage. Recorded videos are uploaded to the cloud, where they can be viewed, shared or downloaded for between one and 30 days, depending on the subscription plan. D-Link offers a free trial plan that supports cloud recordings from up to three cameras, though you can only access videos taken from up to one day ago. The basic plan increases this length to seven days for a monthly fee of US\$2.49 (\$83.37) or a yearly fee of US\$24.99. Higher-tier plans increase the number of supported cameras and the duration that the videos are available on the cloud. The app's live view shows what is happening at the moment – photos and videos manually taken in this mode are saved to the smartphone, not to the cloud. You can also interact with someone on the other side of the camera using the built-in microphone and speaker, though the speaker is not very loud. Unlike many cameras in the market, the D-Link has a microSD card slot for local recordings. It is a handy option for those who are uncomfortable with their videos being uploaded to the cloud. You can choose either local or cloud recording, but not both at the same time. The D-Link camera supports Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant, though the usefulness of this is limited. It has only one good trick – I can ask the Google Assistant to stream the live video feed from the camera via my TV via a Google Chromecast dongle.

• **Verdict:** For its price, the D-Link camera offers plenty of features, notably the option of local or cloud storage for recorded videos.

Vincent Chang



<b>SPECS</b>	
PRICE:	\$129
VIDEO RESOLUTION:	Up to 1920 x 1080 pixels
VIDEO FORMAT:	H.264
FIELD OF VIEW:	137 degrees
NIGHT VISION:	Up to 5m
MOTION DETECTION:	Yes
MOBILE APPS:	iOS and Android
WEIGHT:	105g
<b>RATING</b>	
FEATURES:	3/5
DESIGN:	3/5
PERFORMANCE:	4/5
VALUE:	4/5
OVERALL:	4/5

of smoke. Some can be controlled using voice commands via a Google Home or Amazon Alexa smart speaker. To ensure that all the smart home gadgets work together seamlessly, you may have to purchase all the smart home devices, including the security camera, from the same vendor. Alternatively, third-party services such as IFTTT (If This Then That), can link disparate devices and apps together, as long as they support IFTTT.

**SAFEGUARD YOUR PRIVACY**  
Privacy is especially important for cloud-connected cameras that are available to anyone with

the right credentials. For starters, you can create a strong password for your camera's user account. However, there is very little you can do about hackers who target a vendor's data server, except to pick a reputable brand with a good track record. Some vendors have implemented additional security measures. Arlo, for instance, limits the number of login attempts to five over five minutes to prevent brute-force login attacks. Nest offers two-factor authentication for users of its cameras as an enhanced security feature.

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## Samsung smart security camera has basics covered

Last November, Singtel added a home-monitoring video service, dubbed SmartCam, to its suite of smart home solutions.

Like most of the existing smart home devices offered by Singtel, the SmartCam service comes with a Samsung SmartThings Camera, a 720p Wi-Fi security camera. Also included are 14 days of cloud storage (or till 10GB storage is used) for all the motion-triggered videos uploaded by the camera. The service is exclusive to Singtel and available with a two-year contract (\$8.90 monthly for 24 months). No Samsung smartphone or Samsung smart home devices are required to use the SmartCam service. Simply install Samsung's SmartThings app (for iOS and Android) on a smartphone to set up and control the camera. A Samsung account is necessary to use the app. Adding the camera using the app was straightforward enough. The camera must be powered via a micro-USB connector and be ready to sync (indicated by its LED blinking in amber). Scan the QR code at the back of the camera to start the process. Once set up, the camera is visible on the Dashboard of the SmartThings app. Monitor the live video feed from the camera from anywhere with Internet access. When the camera detects any motion within its view, a notification from the SmartThings app will appear on your smartphone. It will also start to record a video of between 10 and 120 seconds – the duration can be changed in the setting – and upload it to the cloud. As security cameras go, the SmartThings Camera's features are basic. It shoots 720p videos, which should suffice for most home users, though its 110-degree field of view is not as wide as many of its competitors. It can see in the dark – the footage it took at night seemed clear enough to me. The camera's monitoring area can be adjusted in the app, but there is no microphone for audio capture. It can be used by itself without be-



ing a part of a Samsung-powered smart home, but it is more useful as part of one. For instance, it could automatically record videos when a Samsung smart sensor detects smoke or water leakage. Or the camera could be used to trigger a smart siren when it detects motion.

• **Verdict:** Samsung's smart security camera is easy to set up and performs the basic functions well.

Vincent Chang	
<b>SPECS</b>	
PRICE:	\$8.90 a month over 2 years (\$213.60)
VIDEO RESOLUTION:	Up to 1280 x 720 pixels
VIDEO FORMAT:	H.264
FIELD OF VIEW:	110 degrees
NIGHT VISION:	Yes
MOTION DETECTION:	Yes
MOBILE APPS:	iOS and Android
WEIGHT:	155g
<b>RATING</b>	
FEATURES:	3/5
DESIGN:	4/5
PERFORMANCE:	4/5
VALUE:	3/5
OVERALL:	3.5/5

## Phones Sliding to a bezel-less screen

Vincent Chang

Everything old is new again. Remember the old Nokia or Motorola slider phones? Well, such phones are back, sort of, with Oppo and Xiaomi re-imagining the slider design to achieve an all-screen smartphone. The slider mechanism clicks satisfyingly into place, aided by magnets. For added dramatic effect, the edges of the screen light up when you slide the screen down.

Xiaomi has even created five sound effects for the sliding motion – my favourite is the Warrior, the swish of a sword when unsheathed that you hear in movies. The Mi Mix 3's human-powered way is arguably better as there is no risk of the motor breaking down. It is easy enough that a child can do it. But when I hold it up to the light, there is just the tiniest gap between the two layers of the phone, which leaves a tiny doubt on the long-term durability of this design. Yet, the sliding action is very addictive, like clicking a pen or fiddling with a fidget spinner. I found myself playing with the phone most often in the lift, idle and bored without an Internet connection. Xiaomi says the sliding mechanism is tested to last 300,000 cycles. In addition, you can customise the phone's behaviour when you push down the screen, from opening the camera app for a selfie to opening a specific app.

Because of this slider design, the Mi Mix 3's 6.4-inch display does not have a notch – except for a thin chip, it is virtually all screen. It is a 1,080 Samsung-made OLED screen that looks great with punchy colours and is bright and usable in the sun. But the slider design makes it practically impossible to waterproof the phone and increase the thickness and heft. Xiaomi is



not doing its phone any favours by using a ceramic back, which feels premium, but is also heavier than the usual glass back. The Mi Mix 3 weighs 218g, which is more than the weight of the Samsung Galaxy Note9 (201g). A minor issue – you may have trouble finding a case for the Mix 3 because of its slider design. The good news is that Xiaomi includes one in the box. This plastic case has a nice soft-touch finish, though this layer started to peel off after just a week. Another useful extra in the box is a fast wireless charger to complement the wireless charging feature in the Mi Mix 3. Enthusiasts may bemoan the lack of a microSD card slot. The bottom-firing speaker, while producing a decent volume, was easily muffled by my hand while using the phone in landscape orientation. Like Samsung's current flagship phones, the Mi Mix 3 has a dedicated button that triggers a virtual assistant. But while Samsung uses its own Bixby assistant, Xiaomi has chosen the Google Assistant which, in my opinion, is more useful. It has the hardware of a flagship smartphone, like a high-end Qualcomm Snapdragon 845 chip and 6GB of RAM – there is a variant with 10GB RAM. But the feature that makes it a top smartphone is its dual rear camera system. These cameras – both 12-megapixel units with one being a telephoto camera – are excellent. They offer optical image stabilisation and 2x optical zoom. There is very little shutter lag and the autofocus is fast. There is even a handheld night photography mode that requires you to hold the phone steady for a couple of seconds (long exposure shot) for better low-light photos. Photos turned out crisp with little noise. Colours look vibrant and accurate. The night shots were impressive, with the handheld night photography mode capturing details while keeping noise at an ac-

ceptable level. Highlights from light sources were well-done and not overblown. While it is not as amazing as the Google Pixel 3's Night Sight mode, the Mi Mix 3 is definitely one of the better smartphones for night photography. It runs Xiaomi's MIUI 10 interface, based on Android 9. There is no app drawer to display installed apps and Xiaomi, like most manufacturers, have preloaded its own set of system apps, including a browser, calendar and clock. But I found its full-screen gestures, which lets you navigate the interface without the usual Android soft keys, intuitive and user-friendly. These gestures make full use of the phone's near-bezel-less screen. Least impressive is its battery life. Its 3,200mAh battery is modest for its 6.4-inch screen, so you likely need to charge it every day. In the video-loop battery test, it lasted 11 hours and 10 minutes – decent but not fantastic.

• **Verdict:** The Mi Mix 3 is a unique slider smartphone that offers flagship-tier photography capabilities without breaking the bank. But it is heavy, possibly fragile and has average battery stamina.

<b>SPECS</b>	
PRICE:	\$799
PROCESSOR:	Qualcomm Snapdragon 845 (Quad-core 2.8GHz quad-core 1.7GHz)
DISPLAY:	6.39-inch, AMOLED, 2340 x 1080 pixels, 403 ppi pixel density
OPERATING SYSTEM:	MIUI 10 (Android 9.0)
MEMORY:	128GB, 6GB RAM
REAR CAMERAS:	12MP (f/1.8), 12MP telephoto camera (f/2.4)
FRONT CAMERA:	24MP (f/2.2), 2MP depth-sensing
BATTERY:	Non-removable 3,200mAh batteries
<b>RATING</b>	
FEATURES:	4/5
DESIGN:	4/5
PERFORMANCE:	4.5/5
VALUE FOR MONEY:	3/5
BATTERY LIFE:	4/5
OVERALL:	4/5

## Phone with many cameras

Vincent Chang

Does having more cameras in a smartphone let you take better photos?

It depends – Google's Pixel phones take excellent photos despite having a single camera while Huawei's triple-camera smartphones (P20 Pro and Mate 20 Pro) have earned accolades for their photography prowess. Samsung certainly hopes you subscribe to the latter. Its latest Galaxy A9 is the first smartphone to sport four rear cameras. Arranged vertically at the A9's glass back are a 24-megapixel (MP) primary camera, a 10MP telephoto lens, a 10MP ultra-wide-angle camera and a 5MP depth-sensing camera. Except for the addition of the telephoto camera, the other cameras are identical to the trio on the Galaxy A7, a mid-range model (\$428) that we recently reviewed. Because of the telephoto lens, the A9's camera app has an extra option (denoted by a single-tree icon) that enables 2x optical zoom when pressed. It takes sharper photos of faraway objects compared to using digital zoom. I was unimpressed by the A7's cameras, but was expecting more from the A9 because it costs \$300 more than the A7. However, I came away similarly unimpressed. In fact, the same issues I noted in the A7 cropped up again in the A9's photos. For instance, the ultra-wide lens still results in photos with a fair amount of barrel distortion, as well as offering fewer details than the main 24MP camera. Portrait shots with a blurred background look (bokeh effect) make use of the depth-sensing camera, though the results are slightly soft, while their backgrounds, such as a blue sky, had some noise on close examination.

The amount of noise increased greatly when taking photos at night. Images look spotty, while light sources like street lamps are predictably blown out. Design-wise, the A9 has slightly thicker bezels around its OLED screen than the flagship S9 series, though the bezels are not as chunky as the ones on the A7. Its glass back has an attractive bluish gradient finish. A dedicated button to activate Samsung's Bixby virtual assistant is on the left edge – it cannot be remapped to another function. Like the A7, the Galaxy A9 sacrifices premium features such as wireless charging and waterproofing. It also lacks haptic feedback (no vibration when tapping the screen), which is disappointing for its price. But the A9 does retain the headphone jack, as well as a microSD card slot in addition to two nano-SIM slots. More importantly, it has fast charging via its USB Type-C, which is handy considering that it has a sizeable 3,800mAh battery. Thanks to this battery, the A9 has great battery stamina. It lasted an impressive 16 hours and 47 minutes in the video-loop battery test. Powering the A9 is the mid-range Qualcomm Snapdragon 660. The phone runs well and feels responsive. But I was hoping for a higher-end chip considering the A9's price tag.

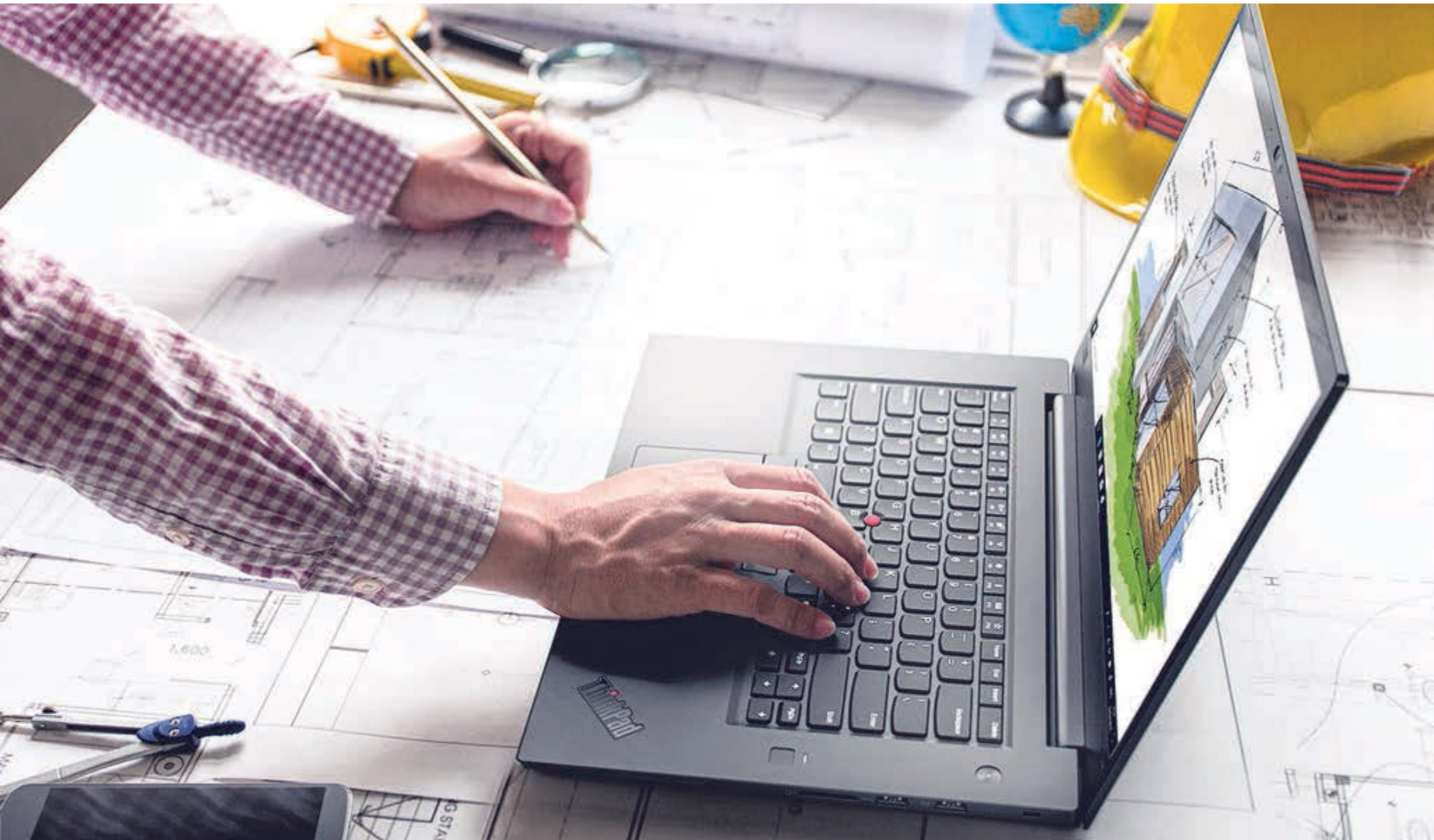
This lack of value is my biggest beef with the A9. It is a decent smartphone, if it was more affordable. At \$728, it costs more than some flagship devices like the OnePlus 6 (\$699). In fact, the A9's biggest competitor is probably Samsung's flagship Galaxy S9, which is better in almost every department except battery life. Launched early last year, the S9 has become more affordable, with a current street price of about \$800.

• **Verdict:** There are better alternatives than the A9 that offer more value. For its price, the camera performance is generally disappointing, though the extra cameras (telephoto and wide-angle) may be of use in some situations.



<b>SPECS</b>	
PRICE:	\$728
PROCESSOR:	Qualcomm Snapdragon 660 (quad-core 2.2GHz quad-core 1.8GHz)
DISPLAY:	6.3-inch, AMOLED, 2220 x 1080 pixels, 393 ppi pixel density
OPERATING SYSTEM:	Android 8.0
MEMORY:	128GB (microSD expandable to 512GB), 6GB RAM
REAR CAMERAS:	24MP (f/1.7), 10MP (f/2.4) telephoto, 8MP ultra-wide (120-degree), 5MP depth (f/2.2)
FRONT CAMERA:	24MP (f/2.0)
BATTERY:	Non-removable 3,800mAh battery
<b>RATING</b>	
FEATURES:	3/5
DESIGN:	4/5
PERFORMANCE:	3/5
VALUE FOR MONEY:	2/5
BATTERY LIFE:	5/5
OVERALL:	3/5





<b>SPECS</b>
PRICE: \$2,929
PROCESSOR: Intel Core i7-8750H (2.2GHz)
GRAPHICS: Nvidia GeForce GTX 1050 Ti 4GB GDDR5 with Max-Q design
RAM: 16GB DDR4
SCREEN SIZE: 15.6 inches, 1920 x 1080 pixels
CONNECTIVITY: 2 x USB Type-C Thunderbolt 3, 2 x USB 3.1 Gen 1, HDMI, network extension, Smart Card reader, SD card reader, audio jack
BATTERY: 80 watt-hour
<b>RATING</b>
FEATURES: 4/5
DESIGN: 4.5/5
PERFORMANCE: 4/5
VALUE FOR MONEY: 3/5
BATTERY LIFE: 5/5
OVERALL: 4.5/5

PC

# Sleek laptop for work and play

Lenovo's X1 Extreme not only has a bigger screen, but also packs a punch in its features

Vincent Chang

Men in suits – that is the first thing that comes to mind when Lenovo's ThinkPad laptops are mentioned. In particular, the premium ThinkPad X1 series seems purpose-built for high-level executives with its sleek professional appearance, lightweight yet sturdy chassis and long battery life.

The new X1 Extreme upsizes the

series with a 15-inch form factor. It is also the first in the series to include a dedicated Nvidia graphics card.

Fittingly, its tagline is "Work hard, play harder".

Like other ThinkPads, the Extreme has a matt black finish. It feels smooth, but is not slippery to hold. A downside is that its exterior picks up smudges and grease, though these can be removed with a quick wipe.

At about 18mm thick, it is relatively thin. It weighs 1.7kg – handy enough for a 15-inch laptop and lighter than the competing Apple MacBook Pro (1.8kg).

Lenovo says four layers of carbon fibre reinforce the lid, which has a small amount of flex. To better dissipate the heat generated by its graphics chip, the bottom of the

Extreme is now made from aluminium instead of carbon fibre.

ThinkPads are renowned for their keyboards and the Extreme does not disappoint. The backlit keyboard feels tactile with good key travel.

Lenovo did not try to squeeze in a numeric keypad even though this is doable for a 15-inch laptop. Hence there is ample space for important keys like Backspace, Enter and Shift – these are comfortably large.

The red pointing stick is still present in the middle of the keyboard for those who prefer this classic input tool.

On the right of the keyboard is a square fingerprint sensor that is fast, accurate and responsive. There is also the option to use your face to unlock the laptop via the

## THE STRAITS TIMES TECH EDITOR'S CHOICE

infrared camera above the screen.

No dongles are required for the Extreme as it has plenty of ports, both old and new. Early adopters will like its two USB Type-C Thunderbolt 3 ports while those who are more traditional will find its HDMI port and USB Type-A ports very convenient. There is also an SD card reader and a Smart Card reader.

The laptop uses Lenovo's proprietary power connector and not USB Type-C for charging. The power

adaptor, which is included, is a 135W version that is bulkier than the usual one.

The Nvidia GeForce GTX 1050 Ti graphics chip is good enough for most games if the eye-candy graphical effects are tuned accordingly. It also helps that the laptop uses a hexa-core Intel Core i7 processor that is designed for gaming laptops and workstations.

In the PCMark 10 system benchmark, the Extreme scored 4,823 – just slightly short of the 4,884 score from Razer's 15-inch Blade gaming laptop. I also managed to play a short game of Civilization VI at full-HD resolution at medium graphics settings without a hitch. In short, the laptop does a decent job of running games as well as perform work-

station tasks like 3-D rendering.

Obviously, it will not outperform a proper workstation with a professional-grade graphics chip or a high-end gaming laptop, but then these notebooks tend not to be as lightweight or sleek as the Extreme.

With a large 80 watt-hour battery, the Extreme lasted seven hours and 40 minutes in the video-loop battery test. This is impressive for a 15-inch laptop.

• **Verdict:** Those who crave more performance from work computers will be delighted with the lightweight yet capable ThinkPad X1 Extreme.

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## Stylish laptop backpack with roomy sections

Trevor Tan

The Targus Groove X2 Max backpack has a minimalist design with very clean lines. You can carry it to office meetings without raising eyebrows and you will not draw attention when travelling with it.

Available in navy blue and charcoal black (version tested), it is also very functional. Its innards have protective velvet lining while its outside is made of materials that are resistant to wear and water.

A cushioned handle on one side comes in handy when you are clearing security checks at airports: It allows you to swiftly carry the backpack when it exits the X-ray conveyor belt. There is a similar cushioned handle on the top of the bag.

The dark grey tones and black zippered lines of the review unit conceal the three main compartments of the backpack.

There is a space for a laptop at the back, a main middle compartment for daily necessities and a thin storage in front for cables and small items. On top of the front compartment is a small zippered pocket for frequently accessed items such as sunglasses.

The laptop compartment is designed to hold a laptop with a 15-inch display. But I managed to stuff a 13-inch Apple MacBook Air and a 13-inch HP Elitebook 820 into this compartment.

The middle compartment has ample space for most of the stuff you need on the road. I squeezed in a compact mirrorless camera, a Nintendo Switch, two power banks, a multi-plug power adaptor, a MacBook Air power adaptor, an external hard drive and a Wi-Fi router during my recent trip to the CES event in Las Vegas.

Plus, there is a small pocket on one side of the middle compartment for a power bank, with a cable-through hole for threading a charging cable out of the backpack's side, so you can



charge your smartphone on the go.

At the back of the middle compartment is a tablet pocket big enough to fit a 10.5-inch iPad Pro.

I like the padded air mesh system at the rear. It is breathable and does not put too much strain on my troublesome back, even after I walked more than 20,000 steps at CES. The shoulder straps are also easily adjustable for a nice fit.

There is a hidden zippered pocket within the air mesh system for important items like your passport.

On the downside, the backpack has only one side pocket. Thus, you can put either only a water bottle or an umbrella there.

• **Verdict:** The Targus Groove X2 Max is an affordable laptop backpack that looks good, carries plenty and does not strain your back.

<b>SPECS</b>
PRICE: \$119
CAPACITY: 33 litres
WEIGHT: 640g
<b>RATING</b>
DESIGN: 4/5
PERFORMANCE: 4/5
VALUE FOR MONEY: 4/5
OVERALL: 4/5

## Audio

# Cool earbuds cancel noise well



Trevor Tan

The Razer Hammerhead USB-C ANC is a pair of USB-C earphones with active noise cancellation (ANC) technology.

Like most Razer products, it has an all-black design, from the tangle-resistant braided cable with in-line remote to the sturdy aluminium earbuds.

The Razer logo on each earbud lights up in Razer's signature green when the earphones are plugged to a USB-C device. It looks pretty cool, like you are wearing illuminated Razer earrings, and will surely draw glances when you are on the MRT.

But there is no way to turn off the logo illumination for those who want to stay under the radar.

The in-line remote has three buttons for volume and playback controls, and a switch to turn the ANC on and off. Razer should have included another switch to turn off the illumination.

The earbuds are nicely designed. The angled ear tips prevent them from slipping out of your ears.

The Hammerhead comes with a black carrying pouch, three extra pairs of silicone ear tips in XS, S, L (the M-sized silicone tips come attached to the buds) and a pair of memory foam ear tips.

I use the memory foam ear tips for this review, as they provide better noise isolation. This effect is immediately apparent when I put on the Hammerhead. Even without turning on ANC, the ambient noise is cut down drastically.

Still, the combined passive and active noise reduction capabilities cannot match the almost-perfect ANC capability of my Bose QuietComfort 20 (QC20) ANC earphones.

I do a comparison on a 17-hour flight back from CES 2019 in Las Vegas and the result is obvious – the QC20 is able to block out most of the engine noise, while the Hammerhead could not.

That said, the QC20 costs twice as much as the Hammerhead.

Despite being a pair of USB-C earphones, the Hammerhead is not compatible with all USB-C devices. Razer has a webpage to show the devices that are compatible.

Obviously, the Razer Phone 1 and Phone 2 have full compatibility with it. Other smartphones with full compatibility include the Google Pixel 2 and 2XL.

I try the Hammerhead with a 15-inch Apple MacBook Pro, the latest iPad Pro, a Samsung Galaxy Note9 and my Nintendo Switch.

It failed to work (no sound output) with the Switch. And you cannot use its call functions with the Note9, although you can still use it to listen to music.

But it works fine with the two Apple devices.

Overall, these earphones deliver great sound with nice mids, crisp details and solid bass. The bass has oomph without being overbearing.

• **Verdict:** The Razer Hammerhead USB-C ANC is a great pair of noise-cancelling earphones that looks cool and sounds great, especially if you have a Razer Phone.

<b>SPECS</b>
PRICE: \$159.90
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 20Hz to 20kHz
IMPEDANCE: 32ohms
CONNECTIVITY: USB-C
WEIGHT: 21g
<b>RATING</b>
FEATURES: 3/5
DESIGN: 4/5
PERFORMANCE: 3.5/5
VALUE FOR MONEY: 3.5/5
OVERALL: 3.5/5



Commentary

# Star Citizen: potential blockbuster or flop?

With a more than \$272-million budget and seven years in development, the video game is still a work in progress



Trevor Tan

Seven years in the making and with a development budget that has swelled to more than US\$200 million (S\$272 million), the in-the-works video game, Star Citizen, is shaping up to be one of the biggest blockbusters that gamers have seen.

Or one of the biggest flops.

When the space-combat simulation game was launched as a Kickstarter campaign in October 2012, Mr Barack Obama was still the President of the United States and Singapore's first Olympic gold

medallist Joseph Schooling had a forgettable Olympics in London.

Since then, the game has raised more than US\$200 million via crowdfunding, with more than 2.2 million backers.

I am one of the Kickstarter backers, drawn by the game's immersive space universe with its own economy and role-playing elements. It allows gamers to choose their occupation and take on various quests to create their story in the game universe.

Backers were promised the game would be released in 2014. But as we enter 2019, the game is still in the alpha stage.

Worse, the signs do not look good if history is any indication.

Games that were in development hell – a gaming lingo for projects that have been in development for too long – have almost always turned out to be flops.

Take the action role-playing game, Too Human, from now-defunct Canadian developer Silicon Knights. Development for the game started in 1999 and when it was finally released in 2008, it was met with a lukewarm response from critics.

I remember reviewing the game then with high expectations, but found it an absolute dud with unintuitive controls, dated

graphics and a cliched storyline.

However, I am not giving up hope yet on Star Citizen, simply because of the ambition and uniqueness of the game.

Star Citizen is not as straightforward as other video games. It is a persistent online game, a single-player-only game (Squadron 42) and a first-person shooter (Star Marine, released in 2016) rolled into one.

It is created by gaming industry veteran Chris Roberts, who was behind the hugely successful Wing Commander space-combat video game series in the 1990s.

Mr Roberts founded Cloud Imperium Games (CIG) in April 2012 to work on Star Citizen before embarking on his fund-raising campaign.

Last month, it received an additional US\$46 million in private funding for 10 per cent of the company's stake. In other words, CIG is now worth nearly half a billion US dollars.

For gamers waiting for the game to launch, there was recently a piece of good news: Along with the funding announcement, Mr Roberts also revealed that Squadron 42 finally has a release time frame – the second quarter of 2020.

That cheered me a little (there is

still no telling if it might be delayed again) because I am more

interested in Squadron 42, which has a star-studded cast of actors Mark Hamill, Gary Oldman, Gillian Anderson, Andy Serkis and other stars.

In this single-player campaign of the game, you play a rookie Navy combat pilot in a capital ship, where you get to know your crew members by having conversations with them. There is a dynamic reputation system that lets you define your character through your actions, creating a unique experience for players.

In other words, Squadron 42 reminds me of the original Wing Commander series that I hold so dear, which is a big part of why I backed Star Citizen in the first place.

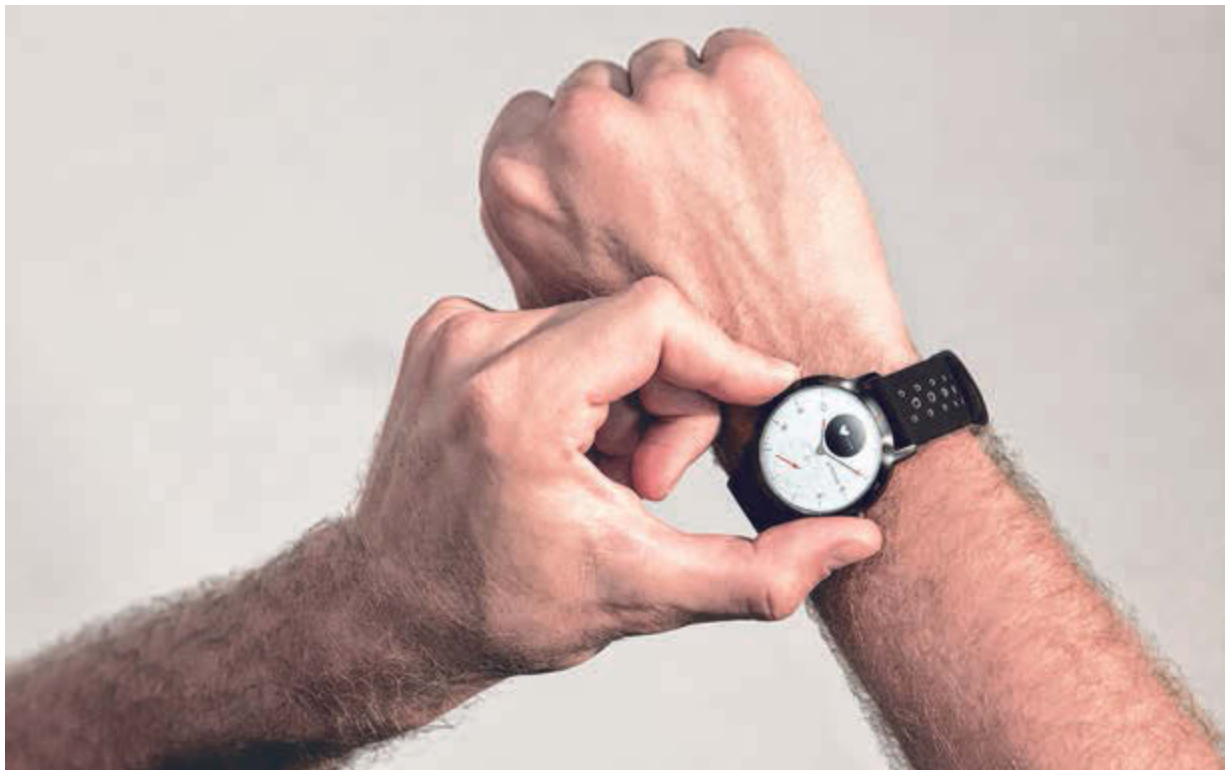
All I wanted is to have the same addictive storyline with great cinematics and superb space-combat dog fights like Wing Commander.

I get that when you roll the Kickstarter dice, you take your chances. But I am hoping that Star Citizen will become a blockbuster that defines a genre and not an expensive flop remembered for the wrong reasons.

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Wearables

## Versatile fitness smartwatch with good battery life



The Withings Steel HR Sport smartwatch is said to last 25 days on a full charge while being paired with a smartphone.

Trevor Tan

Looking for a fitness smartwatch that looks like an analogue watch? The Withings Steel HR Sport is a good place to start your search.

Whether it is the black or white (version tested) watch face model, it has an understated design that suits the office and gym.

Both versions come with a 40mm black stainless-steel round watch case protected by a layer of mineral glass. You can easily swop the silicone watch band for a leather one for a formal look.

It tracks physical activities and sleep quality. Its built-in heart-rate monitor tracks a wearer's heart rate all day and during workouts. It is water-resistant to a depth of 50m.

Both models use the same black soft silicone watch band that has ventilation holes for comfort and breathability during workouts.

Conveniently, they use 20mm watch bands that can easily be bought off-the-shelf.

The analogue watch face has an hour hand and a minute hand. There is a sub-dial at the six o'clock position that shows the percentage of daily activity goals achieved.

You set your daily activity goals when you pair the watch with your smartphone via its Health Mate app (Android and iOS).

On top of the sub-dial is a round monochrome OLED display. Pressing the button on the watch's right toggles this display through date,

heart rate, steps taken, distance walked and calories burned.

The OLED display also shows smartphone notifications, which appear as running text along with a discrete vibration. There is no time-line for the notifications. So, if you miss them, you will have to reach for your smartphone.

The Steel HR Sport can do better in tracking steps. Its readings were nearly 11 per cent less than what my calibrated Apple Watch Series 4 recorded.

It did better in monitoring heart rate, with readings no more than four beats per minute from what my Apple Watch tracked.

However, the Steel HR Sport can do what the Apple Watch cannot – track sleep.

It was able to automatically track my sleep quite accurately, showing the time I went to bed and when I woke up. It also recorded when I was in light sleep, in deep sleep and awake. It offers a sleep score and provides insights on how I can sleep better.

On the downside, the Steel HR Sport does not come with built-in GPS. Instead, it uses connected GPS, which means it needs to use a smartphone's GPS to track runs.

So, you have to take along your smartphone when running with the watch. But it was pretty spot-on in tracking the two runs I did on my usual 5km route, with both readings within 100m from the actual distance.

The Steel HR Sport's biggest

strength is its battery life. On a full charge, it is said to last 25 days while being paired with a smartphone.

After using it for two weeks for two 5km runs, the battery level dropped to only 60 per cent.

The only worry is that you might misplace the charging cable, as you will not be using it that frequently, unlike with other smartwatches.

• **Verdict: The Withings Steel HR Sport might lack smartwatch features, but is the one to get if you want a long-lasting fitness watch that looks like a regular analogue watch.**

<b>SPECS</b>
PRICE: \$329
COMPATIBILITY: Android 6 or higher; iOS 10 or higher
CONNECTIVITY: Bluetooth
WATER RESISTANCE: 50m
WEIGHT: 49g (watch only)
<b>RATING</b>
FEATURES: 3/5
DESIGN: 4/5
PERFORMANCE: 3.5/5
BATTERY LIFE: 5/5
VALUE FOR MONEY: 3.5/5
OVERALL: 4/5

New Products

LG V40 ThinQ

SMARTPHONE

\$1,098, available from Saturday

The 6.4-inch LG V40 ThinQ features a rear triple-camera system consisting of a 16-megapixel super wide-angle camera, a 12-megapixel standard-angle camera and a 12-megapixel telephoto (with 2x zoom) camera.

The front-facing dual-camera system comprises a 5-megapixel wide-angle camera and an 8-megapixel standard-angle camera for creating the bokeh effect, or background blur. In addition, it uses phase-detection autofocus (AF) technology to deliver an AF speed that is twice as fast as the industry average.



Microsoft Surface Pro 6

TABLET

From \$1,398

Powered by an eighth-generation Intel quad-core processor, the new Microsoft Surface Pro 6 is 1½ times faster than the previous Surface Pro while having the same all-day battery life.

Its 12.3-inch (2,736 x 1,824 pixels) touchscreen display that comes with a 165-degree kickstand lets users easily edit photos or binge-watch Netflix shows. Add Microsoft's Signature Type Cover (\$249) and Surface Mouse (\$54) and the Surface Pro 6 becomes a laptop for productivity on the go.



Canon Pixma TS707

INKJET PRINTER

\$179

Aimed at home and small offices, the Canon Pixma TS707 comes with wired and wireless network connectivity and automatic two-sided printing.

It prints monochrome documents at up to 15 images per minute (ipm) and colour documents at up to 10 ipm.



Sony a6400

MIRRORLESS CAMERA

Pricing to be confirmed, available from next month

Sony has released another mid-range mirrorless camera.

The a6400 has a 24.2-megapixel APS-C image sensor and an upgraded Bionz X image processor for shooting speeds of up to 11 frames per second.

It also features 425 phase-detection autofocus (AF) points and 425 contrast-detection AF points for super-quick performance.



TP-Link Archer AX6000

WI-FI ROUTER

\$479

The TP-Link Archer AX6000 is one of the latest Wi-Fi routers to support the new 802.11ax wireless standard, also known as Wi-Fi 6.

The router supports speeds of up to 1,148Mbps on the 2.4GHz band and up to 4,804Mbps on the 5GHz band. It is powered by a 1.8GHz quad-core processor and two co-processors and is designed to ignore signal interference from neighbouring routers for a smooth and stable performance.

It comes with eight Gigabit Ethernet ports, a 2.5Gbps WAN port, a USB 3.0 port and a USB-C port.



Apple Smart Battery Case for iPhone XS, XS Max and XR

IPHONE CASE

\$199

Designed by Apple for the iPhone XS, XS Max and XR, the case is said to increase talk time by up to 37 hours and Internet use by up to 20 hours.

Available in black and white, it features a soft microfibre interior and silicone exterior that protects the phone from scratches and drops. It can be charged via a Lightning cable and Qi wireless chargers.



Compiled by Trevor Tan





Saniyya Sidney (far left) and Mark-Paul Gosselaar star in *The Passage*, about an outbreak from a botched government experiment. PHOTO: FOX

# Relationship at heart of apocalyptic drama

The *Passage* homes in on the father-daughter-like relationship between an orphan who may stop a virus outbreak and the government agent sent to hunt her down

**Alison de Souza**  
In Los Angeles

As the ratings of zombie show *The Walking Dead* (2010 to present) continue to nosedive, along comes another virus-based apocalyptic drama.

Based on a best-selling trilogy by American author Justin Cronin, *The Passage* is about an outbreak from a botched government experiment which turns some death-row inmates into highly infectious vampires. But scientists realise an orphan girl may hold the key to stopping the virus and saving humanity.

Like the books, the series – which airs on Tuesdays at 9pm on Fox (Singtel TV Channel 330 and StarHub TV Channel 505) and is streaming on Fox+ – takes place on an epic scale that spans centuries.

But at a press day in Los Angeles last year, its creators and cast tell *The Straits Times* and other media

that the heart of the story will be the friendship between 10-year-old Amy Bellafonte (Saniyya Sidney) and Brad Wolgast (Mark-Paul Gosselaar), the government agent sent to hunt her down.

Their father-and-daughter-like relationship was inspired by Cronin's own, the author reveals.

The 56-year-old says: "I didn't write these books as a vampire or genre (story) in particular – I wrote this as a father-daughter novel."

"I constructed the story over a period of three months, for an hour every day, with my eight-year-old daughter riding her bicycle and me running beside her. We were playing a game called 'Let's make a novel' and she had dared me to write a story about a girl who saves the world."

Cronin's novels *The Passage* (2010), *The Twelve* (2012) and *The City Of Mirrors* (2016) won fulsome praise, with the *New York Times* Book Review calling *The Passage* "a

literary superthriller" and horror author Stephen King labelling it "one of the great achievements in American fantasy fiction".

With the help of his young daughter, Cronin wrote the initial outline for *The Passage*.

"It was 30 single-spaced pages of material for a novel that was vastly better than what I was supposed to be writing. So I jumped the tracks and wrote these novels."

The actors who play Amy and Wolgast found themselves developing a close bond.

The father-daughter element of the story had been a draw for Gosselaar, 44, who is best known for the sitcom *Saved By The Bell* (1989 to 1993). "What hooked me was the relationship with Amy. I have a 12-year-old daughter and, for me, that was the heart of the story."

Saniyya, who has appeared in films such as *Hidden Figures* (2016), loved working with the older actor.

"He taught me that you've got to have a laugh at times."

"When we're doing a scene, it's awesome to be able to see him in the moment. So I learn off of that. And then when I act and I'm with him, it feels wonderful," says the 12-year-old.

The relationship of these two characters aside, the show will depart from the books in crucial ways, including how it structures the action, say its creators.

Showrunner, writer and executive producer Liz Heldens is a fan of the books, but she chose to begin the series with a look at the government experiment, Project Noah, where things first go wrong.

"The reason the beginning of the show is different was an effort to give everyone in the show a credible point of view," she says.

"The scientists at Project Noah know there's a pandemic coming – there's a huge emergency and they need this little girl to get the vac-

cine ready. They're doing the wrong thing for the right reasons – that was an effort to make sure all the characters had nuance and you could understand why everybody is doing what they're doing."

Although Cronin is credited as a writer on the show, he was happy to let Heldens do her thing.

He says: "A book is not a fixed thing – it's something that happens in the mind of a reader and it happens differently every single time somebody reads it."

"So adapting it – that happens every time the book gets read. What's happening here is adapting it for an entirely different medium that has a different toolbox, rhythms and constraints."

stlife@sph.com.sg

• The *Passage* airs on Tuesdays at 9pm on Fox (Singtel TV Channel 330 and StarHub TV Channel 505) and is also streaming on Fox+.

## Relive Teresa Teng days at Beijing restaurant

BEIJING • A beer in one hand, a microphone in the other, Mr Meng Xiaoli stood in a crowded restaurant and began to sing.

"Your smile is as sweet as honey/ Just like flowers blooming in the spring breeze/ I wonder where I've seen you?"

During the workweek, Mr Meng, 53, a strait-laced budget analyst who wears a red Chinese Communist Party pin on his lapel, spends his days shuttling between meetings and poring over reports for a state-owned firm.

But on weekends, he retreats to what he calls his "spiritual home", a two-storey restaurant and museum in Beijing that is a shrine to a woman he considers a goddess: Taiwanese pop singer Teresa Teng, one of Asia's most celebrated artists.

"She knows what it's like to be human – to find love and to make mistakes," he said.

Teng, who died suddenly in 1995 at age 42, was renowned for turning traditional Taiwanese and Chinese

folk songs into maudlin Western-style hits.

She was once banned in the mainland, her music denounced by the authorities as "decadent" and "pornographic". But she never lost her base of rabid fans there, even as tensions have escalated between China and Taiwan, the self-ruled island that Beijing considers part of its territory.

Her most ardent followers now gather at the Teresa Teng Music-Themed Restaurant, in a sprawling residential neighbourhood in western Beijing, near liquor stores, barbecue joints and hotpot restaurants. An enormous portrait of Teng, smiling as she holds a white rose, graces its front door.

Inside, singers dressed in elegant gowns perform renditions of her signature ballads, such as *The Moon Represents My Heart* and *Sweet As Honey*.

Customers sample dishes inspired by her music, including "moon pancakes" and fried pump-

kin with honey sauce.

More than two decades after her death, Teng's mainland fans say her sugary voice and gentle personality are still one of a kind.

"She's a storyteller," said Mr Zheng Rongbin, the media executive who opened the restaurant in 2011. "She looks like the girl next door."

Teng is claimed by many mainlanders as one of their own, even though she was born in Taiwan.

Her father, who grew up in the mainland in the northern province of Hebei, was part of the Kuomintang forces that fought Mao Zedong's communists in the Chinese Civil War. He retreated to Taiwan in 1949, four years before Teng's birth.

Teng was one of the first overseas singers whose music flowed into China after it began opening its economy to the world in the late 1970s.

But her music was quickly banned as part of a campaign by the Chinese government to block "spiritual pollution" from the West.

The Taiwanese government used her music as a psychological weapon, blasting it from loudspeakers positioned near the mainland.

Tapes of Teng's music circulated on a black market in the mainland and her popularity was clear. Because of her last name, which in Chinese uses the same character as paramount leader Deng Xiaoping's, she was sometimes referred to as Little Deng, reflecting her hold on the public imagination.

Teng occasionally veered into politics, holding concerts to show solidarity with the pro-democracy protesters who gathered at Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989. She never performed in the mainland.

In recent years, however, the Chinese government has warmed to her music and the state-run media has celebrated her mainland roots.

In 2011, officials opened a memorial hall in honour of Teng in her father's home town, Daming, where fans now converge on the anniversary of her death.



Singers in elegant gowns perform renditions of Teresa Teng's signature ballads in the Teresa Teng Music-Themed Restaurant in Beijing, which also serves dishes inspired by her music. Teng's music was once banned in the mainland for being "decadent" and "pornographic". PHOTO: NYTIMES

The mainland has at least two restaurants devoted to Teng, including the one in Beijing, which is at the centre of a struggling cultural development known as Taiwan Street. Mr Zheng, the owner, said Teng's music is still popular in the mainland because it reminds people of hearing her songs for the first time

in the years after the chaos of Mao's Cultural Revolution.

"For many people, it was a very new experience and very different from what they had heard in the Cultural Revolution," he said. "Now, when people hear it, they remember what it was like to be young." NYTIMES



# Hey baby, let's go to the jungle



I was in the mangrove swamps and the only edible things around were snails and I had to eat them raw, which made me retch. But they were a good source of protein and fats, so I had to eat them.



ED STAFFORD (left) on his most disgusting meal in his new show, First Man Out

First Man Out pits British explorer Ed Stafford against other adventurers and survivalists to see who can get out of some of the most hostile environments on the planet first. PHOTO: DISCOVERY CHANNEL

We don't want to become boring just because we started a family, says explorer Ed Stafford, who took his young son to meet his adventurer wife in Guyana's wilderness

Jan Lee

For famed explorer Ed Stafford, getting dropped alone in the middle of nowhere is not too far out of his comfort zone.

Noted for his work in Discovery series such as Marooned With Ed Stafford (2014 to present), where he travels into the wild and attempts to survive with no food and only an emergency phone, medical kit and his camera, Stafford is used to flying solo.

But his new show, First Man Out, puts his survival skills to even more extreme tests.

It pits the 43-year-old one-on-one against other explorers and survivalists to see who can get out before the other from some of the most hostile environments on the planet.

"I've always believed in pushing

myself out of my comfort zone and I think with a competition element, the intensity of the show is upped," Stafford tells The Straits Times over the phone.

"And now there's time pressure, which is more realistic because in an actual survival situation there will be time pressure."

Stafford admits that he was a tad hesitant when the series was pitched to him.

He says: "To me, it's important that the competition is real and not scripted. But I wondered if it might be a blow to my reputation if I lost the challenges."

"But at the end of the day, it's not about proving that I'm the best, it's more about pushing myself to new limits."

The six-part series, filmed in 4K technology, also known as ultra-high definition, takes Stafford and his competitors to Palau, Borneo,

Kazakhstan, Thailand, Mongolia and India.

The British-born explorer says of the many Asian locations: "Asia is the place to be right now. It has a great variety – I was in mangrove swamps, mountains and jungles and on islands. It really made for an amazing series."

Stafford, who in 2010 became the first man to walk the entire length of the Amazon River, was impressed with Borneo, which spans across Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei and is home to one of the oldest rainforests in the world.

"The trees in the jungles of Borneo are so tall and grand. Walking underneath the canopy and looking up, it's majestic," he says.

Borneo is also where he had his most disgusting meal of the series.

"I was in the mangrove swamps and the only edible things around were snails and I had to eat them

raw, which made me retch. But they were a good source of protein and fats, so I had to eat them."

The one thing that has given the daredevil pause is the birth of his son, Ran, in June 2017 with fellow celebrity-adventurer wife Laura Bingham, 25.

"As a parent, you want to wrap your kid up and you don't want anything to happen to him. But I'm someone who owes a lot to taking risks. I think people who don't take risks cut off a big part of their lives."

And little Ran – named after legendary British explorer Ranulph Fiennes – has had more adventures than many adults.

In February last year, Bingham embarked on an expedition to navigate the length of Guyana's Essequibo River by kayak.

Stafford took their baby to meet his wife midway through her trip – in the wilderness of the Guyana jun-

gle. He said every risk assessment was done before the trip and an insurance policy worth \$2 million was bought.

"We don't want to become boring just because we started a family," he explains.

One thing he still has on his bucket list?

"I want to walk across Antarctica without any food drops. That's still a dream of mine."

But before funding for such an expedition comes in, Stafford aims to be a family man.

"There is a little person in my life now, so I want to balance that with my work."

janlee@sph.com.sg

• Ed Stafford: First Man Out premieres on the Discovery Channel (Singtel TV Channel 202) on Tuesday at 9.55pm.

## Lea Salonga cancels concerts here next month

Jan Lee

Tony Award-winning singer and actress Lea Salonga has cancelled her two-night concert in Singapore, originally scheduled to take place on Feb 13 and 14 at the Esplanade Concert Hall, due to a leg injury.

Ticketing service provider Sistic informed customers of the cancellation on Monday via e-mail. An official statement was also uploaded on her official Twitter account on the same day.

The 47-year-old said: "It is with a heavy heart that I must cancel my upcoming tour dates in Hong Kong and Singapore. As many of you know, during a recent ski trip in Japan, I took a fall and broke my leg."

"While we initially hoped to be able to keep the appearances on the calendar, the injury is going to take longer than expected to heal and my doctors have given me strict instructions not to travel for the next several weeks."

Salonga posted a video on her Instagram account earlier this month from Hokkaido, where she and her family were on a ski vacation, explaining that she broke her tibia while skiing.

She reassured fans then that she would be able to go through with



The Tony Award-winning singer and actress had hoped to continue her music tour despite her leg injury, but was told by doctors not to travel for several weeks.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/MSLEASALONGA

her music tour, The Human Heart, which would also have brought her to Hong Kong on Feb 8 to 10.

Salonga won a Tony Award for Best Actress In A Musical in 1991 for her role as a Vietnamese bargirl in the Broadway production of Miss Saigon, and was the singing voice of Princess Jasmine in the Disney animated film Aladdin (1992) and the titular character in Mulan (1998) and Mulan II (2004).

Tickets to see the Filipino singer here ranged from \$48 to \$248.

Those who have purchased tickets to the show will receive a full refund via Sistic, and those who paid using credit card will receive automatic refunds in about two weeks.

Those who paid using cash or via

Nets are advised to go to the Esplanade with their tickets to receive a full refund from the Esplanade Box Office (mezzanine level, open from noon to 8.30pm daily).

The refunding process began yesterday and will continue until Feb 4. Those who are unable to collect refunds personally can call Sistic on 6828-8377 to make arrangements.

But there is hope yet for fans of Salonga who want to catch her live in Singapore.

She said on Twitter: "Disappointing fans is the last thing I would ever want to do, but I must take this time to get back into top shape. We're working on rescheduling these shows and I can't wait to see you all very soon."

## Love in 200 words

This Valentine's Day, The Straits Times invites you to tell us a love story in miniature

Send us a story about love – true, imagined, funny, sad, yours, anybody's – in 200 words, 200 being the magic number this Bicentennial year. We will publish the best entries on Feb 10.

- All entries must be 200 words or fewer.
- The Straits Times reserves the right to curate, edit and publish the entries at its discretion.
- Entries should not contain profanity or graphic language.

Send your entry to [stlife@sph.com.sg](mailto:stlife@sph.com.sg) by Jan 31 with "LOVE STORY" in the e-mail subject line, along with the following details:

- Your full name as in your NRIC
- Your date of birth
- Your mobile phone number
- Your e-mail address





# #10YearChallenge a boon to facial recognition technology?

**Author Kate O'Neill's post on whether the data could be mined has hit a nerve with people who share such concerns**

NEW YORK • The #10YearChallenge was all fun and memes until a recent tweet moved thousands of people to worry: Are we unknowingly helping giant corporations to improve their algorithms for biometric identification and age progression?

The #10YearChallenge gained widespread traction on social media this month. It calls for posting two photos of yourself side by side – one from today and one from a decade ago – to show how you have changed.

People are participating mostly on Facebook and Instagram, which is owned by Facebook.

Some made jokes, paid tribute to old hairstyles or drew attention to issues such as global warming. Celebrities posted glamour shots that showed negligible changes from one decade to the next.

But one post went viral without featuring any side-by-side photos at all. It was written by Kate O'Neill, author of the book *Tech Humanist*:

How You Can Make Technology Better For Business And Better For Humans.

"Me 10 years ago: probably would have played along with the profile picture ageing meme going around on Facebook and Instagram," she wrote in a tweet on Jan 12.

"Me now: ponders how all this data could be mined to train facial recognition algorithms on age progression and age recognition."

O'Neill's words hit a nerve. People responded with concerns about whether they were helping the tech giant get better at identifying people. Her post got more than 10,000 retweets and more than 20,000 likes. She expanded on her thoughts in a widely shared article in *Wired*.

Experts said the photos uploaded for the #10YearChallenge were drops in a very, very big bucket of data that Facebook has been collecting for years.

"We have an awful lot of data that we're sharing all the time, and companies are collecting it and using it in various ways," O'Neill said, adding that she was not trying to stoke any panic.

Supporters of facial recognition technologies said they can be indispensable for catching criminals or finding missing people. But critics



Actress Reese Witherspoon's post shows negligible changes over 10 years. PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/REESEWITHERSPOON

DNA, which is increasingly being used by law enforcement to track down suspects – something many people might not have anticipated when they volunteered saliva in exchange for help tracing their ancestral roots.

"There are things we don't think of as being threats," Dr Rhue said. "And then five or 10 years from now, we realise that there is a threat, but the data has already been given."

Facebook said the 10-year challenge is just a fun trend.

"The 10-year challenge is a user-generated meme that started on its own, without our involvement," the company said on Twitter.

Similar memes have popped up in past years too. But this time, users are grappling with new concerns about a platform that helps people to stay in touch with grandparents but has also been used as a tool of election interference.

O'Neill said she was glad that the meme – and her tweet – started such a broad conversation about facial recognition and privacy.

"There's a lot of opportunities for technology to do wonderful things for humanity," she added. "But I think we need to recognise the potential downsides of it."

NYTIMES

warned they can enable mass surveillance or have unintended effects that we cannot yet fully fathom.

Dr Lauren A. Rhue, an assistant professor of information systems and analytics at the Wake Forest School of Business, said the #10YearChallenge could conceivably provide a relatively clean data set for a company that wanted to work on age-progression technology.

But she added that Facebook already has billions of photographs on its platform, and people should be wary of any company being in possession of such a large trove of biometric data.

"The risk in giving up any type of biometric data to a company is that there's not enough transparency, not only about how the data is currently being used, but also the future uses for it," she said, pointing to another form of biometric data,

thenewpaper

## Biker Boy

Hit the open road and explore life on two wheels

tnp.sg/lifestyle

தமிழ்மூரக

Lost in translation?

**A**

**அ**

**Tamil Murasu provides error-free translation from English to Tamil**

**Proof reading available**

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email: cmuthu@sph.com.sg

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**NOTICES**



Co-op Funeralcare's rainbow hearse is requested, on average, twice a month by families across Britain. PHOTO: WWW.CO-OPERATIVE.COOP

## McDonald's, fancy dress and a rainbow hearse: Britons are doing death differently

LONDON • Britons are increasingly shunning traditional funerals in favour of more unusual send-offs, which last year included a McDonald's-themed drive-through event and a service for a magician where the undertakers wore red noses.

Two-fifths of British adults now want their funeral to be a celebratory affair, according to Co-op Funeralcare, while soaring demand for personalisation means the provider has seen requests for alternative hearses, such as adapted Land Rovers and rainbow-hued vehicles, rise by a fifth in three years.

The trends are revealed in January – a grim month when there are typically 30 per cent more deaths recorded in the second week than in any other week during the rest of the year – and a busy one for the funeral industry, now worth more than £2 billion (\$\$3.5 billion) a year.

Last year, the Co-op launched a large-scale national study into dying in Britain – in which more

than 30,000 Britons were questioned – in an effort to break taboos around the subject and to encourage people to discuss their wishes.

That revealed that 41 per cent want their funeral to be a celebration of life rather than a sad occasion. A further 20 per cent say they will ask mourners to wear bright colours instead of traditional black.

Britain's biggest funeral chain highlighted its "quirkiest" funerals from last year, which included a Christmas in July send-off with Santa, Rudolph and Santa's little helpers in attendance and family and friends dressed in Christmas jumpers despite the scorching summer heat.

In a McDonald's-themed send-off for teenager Joshua Connolly-Teale – a fan of the fast-food chain – the cortege travelled to the local McDonald's drive-through before stopping in the carpark to allow family and friends to dispatch balloons. The family returned to the restaurant for the wake.

Mrs Heather Perry devised a

humanist service "full of fun and humour" for her husband, Arthur, who died aged 86 in July last year after a lifetime as a magician and children's entertainer for which he dressed as a clown.

"The undertakers all wore red noses and at the end, a traditional magician's ritual was performed in which a wand is broken indicating that it is no longer needed as the person has passed away," said Mrs Perry of Polegate, East Sussex.

"It was a day to remember and I am very glad I did it this way as it summed up Arthur's humour and personality."

Other alternative funerals included a fancy-dress theme – with the funeral director dressed as He-Man and guests including Elvis Presley, Red Riding Hood and a ninja turtle – and an Only Fools And Horses send-off for a comedy enthusiast featuring a Reliant Regal hearse.

"We all lead unique lives and our final goodbye should definitely reflect that," said Mr David Collingwood, the Co-op's director of funer-

als. "Personalised touches don't need to be extravagant – it can be something as small as changing the funeral directing team's ties."

Meanwhile, specialist transport companies have also stepped into the breach by offering unusual options.

VW Funerals, for example – based in Nuneaton – has expanded its fleet of adapted hearse-style VW camper vans which consumers can hire independently of their funeral director.

No-frills cremations – as chosen by the late singer and musician David Bowie – are also rising in popularity as an alternative to traditional services.

The Co-op launched a no-frills service last year, while Simplicity Cremations (the direct cremation arm of publicly listed company Dignity) launched a new cremation package in October last year to provide families with all the practical and essential elements of a cremation without expensive ceremonial extras. THE GUARDIAN



Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

**AM**  
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)  
6.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)  
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)  
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)  
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (V)  
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)  
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)  
**PM**  
12.00 Martha Bakes 6 (HD) (IE)  
12.30 Secret Meat Business (IE)  
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)  
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (V)  
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)  
2.30 Arts 21 (HD) (Cul)  
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)  
4.00 Make You Laugh Out Loud 3 (PG) (V)  
4.30 Survivor 36 (PG) (V)  
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)  
6.30 The \$100,000 Pyramid (V)  
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)  
7.30 America's Got Talent: The Champions (V)  
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)  
9.00 News 5 (HD)  
9.30 The Wish (CC) (IE)  
10.00 Enemy Within (PG13) (CC) (IE)  
11.00 Scorpion 2 (HD) (PG) (D)  
**AM**  
12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)  
12.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)  
1.20 Hawaii Five-0 7 (PG13) (D)  
2.20 Grimm 5 (HD) (PG13) (D)  
3.10 Plastic Surgery Is My Business (PG13) (IE)/3.40 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)  
4.10 Martha Bakes 6 (IE)  
4.40 Secret Meat Business (PG) (IE)  
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

**AM**  
6.00 Ah Ma Can Cook (V)  
7.00 Frontline (CA)  
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (News)  
8.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)  
9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)  
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)

10.00 Stay Healthy Stay Happy 2017 (IE)  
10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)  
**PM**  
12.30 Street Smart 2 (V)  
1.00 News 8 At One (HD)  
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)  
2.00 New Doraemon (S)  
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)  
3.30 The Golden Path (CC) (D)  
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)  
5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D)  
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)  
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)  
8.00 A Sweet Taste Of Art (CC) (IE)  
9.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)  
10.00 News Tonight (HD)  
10.30 Fruit, Veggies & Me 2 (HD) (CC) (IE)  
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (D)  
**AM**  
12.00 The Princess Weiyong (PG) (D)  
1.00 Celebrity Chef 2 (HD) (V)  
2.00 A Time To Dance (D)  
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

**PM**  
3.00 Scrum! (PG) (CC) (D)  
4.00 Greener Pastures (CC) (IE)  
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)  
6.00 The Menu (PG) (CC) (D)  
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)  
9.00 Schools Unlimited (CC) (IE)  
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)  
11.00 News Tonight  
11.30 Schools Unlimited (CC) (Info-Ed) (IE)  
**AM**  
12.30 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)  
2.30 Close

CNA

**AM**  
6.00 Singapore Tonight  
7.00 First Look Asia  
9.00 Asia Business First  
10.02 Into The Vault  
11.00 News Now  
**PM**  
1.02 Real Deal  
2.00 News Now  
4.02 Into The Vault

5.00 News Now  
7.02 Real Deal (CC)  
8.00 Primetime Asia  
9.02 Champions For Change (CC)  
10.00 Singapore Tonight  
11.02 Real Deal  
**AM**  
12.00 News Now  
12.30 Power List Asia 6  
1.02 Champions For Change  
2.00 News Now  
2.30 The Successors 6  
3.02 Into The Vault  
4.00 News Now  
4.30 Millionaire Minds 2  
5.02 Champions For Change  
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

**PM**  
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)  
3.30 Azhagiya Snehithi 2 (IE)  
4.00 Sundaram Kudumbathinar (HD) (D)  
4.30 Enna Nadakuthu 6 (HD) (V)  
5.30 Motu Patlu 3 (S)  
6.00 Ishq Ka Rang Safed (Hindi) (D)  
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam 2 (Cul) (CC) (D)  
7.30 Mella Thiranthathu Kathavu 2 (PG) (CC) (D)  
8.00 Uyire (PG) (D)  
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)  
9.00 Ethiroli 15 (HD) (CC) (CA)  
9.30 Theerpugal 4 (CC) (IE)  
10.00 Rowthiram (PG13) (D)  
10.30 Bayam (PG) (CC) (D)  
11.00 Nyabagam Varuthae 3 (V)  
11.30 Tamil Seithi (Encore) (News)  
**AM**  
12.00 Close

OKTO

**AM**  
9.00 Twirlywoos (P)  
9.30 Teddies (P)  
10.00 Doki (HD) (P)  
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)  
11.00 Peppa Pig (P)  
11.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)  
**PM**  
12.00 Hiccup & Sneeze (P)

12.30 Teddies (P)  
1.00 Coconut The Little Dragon (P)  
1.30 Twirlywoos (P)  
2.00 Doki (HD) (P)  
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)  
3.00 Peppa Pig (P)  
3.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)  
4.00 Odd Squad (S)  
4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate Dinosaurs (S)  
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)  
5.30 Marcus Level (S)  
6.00 The Lion Guard (S)  
6.25 Backward Race (S)  
6.30 Tottally Totto (HD) (S)  
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (HD) (CC) (S)  
7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (CC) (S)  
8.00 Turning Mecard (S)  
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (HD) (CC) (S)  
9.00 ATP 250: ASB Classic Auckland 2019 (Sports)  
11.00 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)  
**AM**  
12.00 Close

SURIA

**PM**  
3.00 Juxbox Ekspres  
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)  
5.00 Rintihan Hati (HD) (CC) (D)  
6.00 Ejen Ali (HD) (S)  
6.30 Top 5 Makan (CC) (IE)  
7.00 Makmum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D) (Debut)  
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)  
8.30 Detik (PG) (CA)  
9.00 Lagenda (IE) (Finale)  
9.30 Hilang Kasih Di Sarajevo (CC) (D)  
10.30 Instagram (PG) (CC) (D)  
11.30 Berita (HD) (News) (R)  
**AM**  
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety  
  
Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

TheStarsSay

**Aries** (March 21 - April 19)  
You feel the need to exercise caution. An accident may happen, but it is unlikely to cause injury.

**Taurus** (April 20 - May 20)  
Your great energy is perfect for social events. Things should go your way if you are part of a group.

**Gemini** (May 21 - June 20)  
You are picking up on new ideas with ease and may need to train others in their use.

**Cancer** (June 21 - July 22)  
Your social energy is primed for strong connections, so it is easier than usual to start new relationships.

**Leo** (July 23 - Aug 22)  
You need to backtrack and rethink your strategy. Your energy is best spent on reflecting.

**Virgo** (Aug 23 - Sept 22)  
Stop putting off your dreams. Your energy is perfect for beginnings – you may get a new job or romance.

**Libra** (Sept 23 - Oct 22)  
Do what must be done – you cannot avoid your responsibilities for long.

**Scorpio** (Oct 23 - Nov 21)  
Guard your secrets fiercely, but you can tell the people you trust.

**Sagittarius** (Nov 22 - Dec 21)  
You are struggling with an authority figure. Things should come to a head by the end of the day.

**Capricorn** (Dec 22 - Jan 19)  
Your plans are coming together. It is the best time to figure out where you want to go and how to get there.

**Aquarius** (Jan 20 - Feb 18)  
You need to investigate matters deeply when you feel something is not right.

**Pisces** (Feb 19 - March 20)  
Information from unexpected sources will come to you and your energy is better spent taking action.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

**AM**  
8.00 Storage Wars 10  
8.30 Pawn Stars 19  
9.30 The Pickers 11/10.25 Forged In Fire 4  
11.20 Storage Wars 12  
**PM**  
12.15 Football Godfathers/1.10 Mountain Men 7/2.05 Pawn Stars 18  
2.35 Lone Star Restoration  
3.30 Storage Wars: Texas 6  
3.55 Storage Wars 10  
4.25 Forged In Fire 4  
5.20 Mountain Men 7  
6.15 The Pickers 11/7.10 Pawn Stars 19  
8.05 History Drama: Project Blue Book  
9.00 Ancient Aliens 10  
9.55 History Drama: Project Blue Book  
10.50 Hunting Hitler 2  
11.45 Football Godfathers

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

**AM**  
6.00 Dance Moms 6/7.00 Idol Moms  
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16  
9.00 Little Women: Terra's Big House  
10.00 Gok's Fill Your House For Free  
11.00 Zoo 3  
**PM**  
12.00 Dance Moms 6  
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16  
2.00 Menendez: Blood Brothers  
3.35 Married At First Sight Australia 4  
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16  
6.00 Idol Moms/7.00 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family/7.30 Married At First Sight Australia 4/9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16/10.00 A Sister's Secret  
11.35 Idol Moms

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

**AM**  
6.00 Mr. Woodcock (NC16)  
7.30 The Good Dinosaur  
9.00 Johnny English Reborn  
10.40 Confessions Of A Shopaholic  
**PM**  
12.20 Braven (NC16)  
1.55 Body Of Lies  
4.00 Invincible  
5.40 Lilo & Stitch  
7.05 Thor/9.00 Stephanie (NC16)  
10.25 True Detective 3 (NC16)  
11.30 It (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

**AM**  
6.15 The General's Daughter (NC16)  
8.10 Hustle & Flow (NC16)  
10.00 The LXD: Rise Of The Drifts  
11.25 The Chamber (1996)  
**PM**  
1.15 The Brave One (NC16)  
3.15 The Jetsons & WWE: Robo-Wrestlemania  
4.40 Twins/6.30 Driven  
8.25 Sleepless (NC16)  
10.00 Pulp Fiction (M18)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

**AM**  
8.15 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)  
9.15 Downy (HD)  
10.15 Viva La Romance (HD)  
**PM**  
12.15 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/1.30 Tomorrow With You (HD)  
2.45 The King Vs The King 2 (HD)  
4.45 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/6.00 Downy (HD)  
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)  
8.00 Chinese Restaurant 2 (HD)  
10.00 Noble Aspirations (HD)  
11.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

**AM**  
6.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018  
7.00 Tennis: ATP 500 Citi Open Day 5 Quarter-finals  
**PM**  
12.00 Table Tennis: Seamaster 2019 ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open: Women's Semi-finals, Men's Quarter-finals And Mixed Doubles Finals  
4.15 ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019: Ladies' Short Programme/10.00 Extreme Sports: World Surf League 2018: Billabong Pipe Masters Highlights/11.00 ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019: Opening  
11.45 ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019: Pairs' Short Programme

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

**AM**  
6.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV  
7.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Macau Black Bears Vs Zhuhai Wolf Warriors  
9.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG) (Live)/11.00 The Football Review  
11.30 Football: The EFL Highlights 2018/19  
**PM**  
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV  
12.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Hong Kong Eastern Vs Formosa Dreamers  
2.30 Football: Supercoppa Italiana 2018/19  
3.00 Boxing: WBA Welterweight World Championship Manny Pacquiao Vs Adrien Broner  
4.00 Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)  
4.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Mono Vampire Vs Saigon Heat (Live)  
6.30 The Football Review  
7.00 Football: The EFL Highlights 2018/19  
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV  
8.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Zhuhai Wolf Warriors Vs San Miguel Alab Pilipinas (Live)  
10.00 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13)  
**AM**  
12.30 Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)  
1.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV  
1.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Macau Black Bears Vs Zhuhai Wolf Warriors  
5.30 Magazine: The Burning Issue  
3.45 Football: EFL Carabao Cup 2018 Semi-finals 2, Leg 2 Burton Albion Vs Manchester City (Live)

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

**AM**  
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show  
8.00 Teen Titans Go!  
9.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings  
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show  
10.00 We Bare Bears  
10.30 Supernobots  
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls  
**PM**  
12.00 Teen Titans Go!  
1.00 We Bare Bears  
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu  
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls  
3.00 Running Man Animation  
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball  
4.00 We Bare Bears  
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls  
5.00 Teen Titans Go!  
5.30 Ben 10  
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches  
6.30 Running Man Animation  
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show  
7.30 Grizzy And The Lemmings  
8.00 We Bare Bears  
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls  
10.00 Regular Show  
10.30 Steven Universe  
11.00 Clarence  
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

**AM**  
6.00 Killjoys 3  
6.45 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior  
7.30 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2  
8.20 MacGyver  
9.10 American Ninja Warrior 8  
10.00 Killjoys 3  
10.50 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 3  
11.40 Carnage  
**PM**  
12.35 MacGyver  
1.25 Quantico 2  
2.15 American Ninja Warrior 8  
3.05 Killjoys 3  
3.55 Carnage  
4.45 MacGyver  
5.35 American Ninja Warrior 8  
6.25 The Blacklist 6  
7.15 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2  
8.05 NCIS: Los Angeles 8  
9.45 Seal Team 2  
10.35 Supernatural 14  
11.25 Seal Team 2

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

**AM**  
7.45 Major Crimes  
8.35 Supergirl 2  
9.25 The Flash 3  
10.15 Clippholics  
11.05 Breaking The Magician's Code  
11.55 Pan  
**PM**  
1.55 Friends 9

2.20 Clippholics  
3.10 Breaking The Magician's Code  
4.00 The Flash 3  
4.50 Supergirl 2  
5.40 Top 20 Funniest  
6.30 The Flash 3  
7.20 The Big Bang Theory 9  
7.45 Friends 9  
8.10 Top 20 Funniest 2  
9.00 Lethal Weapon 3  
9.50 Harry Potter And The Sorcerer's Stone

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

**AM**  
6.50 Just For Laughs Gags 12  
7.15 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
7.40 Mr Bean  
8.10 Your Face Or Mine 4  
8.35 Most Ridiculous 2  
9.00 Billy On The Street 5  
9.25 Takeshi's Castle 4  
9.50 Mr Bean  
10.20 Most Ridiculous 2  
10.45 Almost Royals 2  
11.15 Saturday Night Live 43  
**PM**  
12.05 The Daily Show 24  
12.30 All Access: David Spade  
1.15 Just For Laughs Gags 14  
1.40 Inside Comedy 3  
2.40 Mr Bean  
3.10 Takeshi's Castle 4  
3.35 Most Ridiculous 2  
4.00 Almost Royals 2  
4.25 Lip Sync Battle 4  
5.15 Hood Adjacent With James Davis  
5.40 The Jim Jefferies Show  
6.05 The Daily Show 24  
6.30 Caraoke Showdown  
6.55 Above Average Presents  
7.00 Your Face Or Mine 4  
7.25 Most Ridiculous 2  
7.50 Billy On The Street 5  
8.10 Takeshi's Castle 4  
8.35 The Goldbergs 5  
9.25 Hot In Cleveland 5  
10.15 Inglorious Pranksters  
10.30 Inside Amy Schumer  
10.55 The Fuccons  
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show  
11.25 The Fuccons  
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

**AM**  
7.00 First Love  
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age  
9.00 Eagle And Youngster  
10.00 100% Wife  
**PM**  
12.10 First Love  
1.00 In The Name Of Love  
2.00 100% Wife  
4.10 Entrepreneurial Age  
5.00 First Love  
6.00 In The Name Of Love  
7.00 100% Wife  
9.10 First Love  
10.00 Entrepreneurial Age  
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

Radio

KISS92

**AM**  
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning  
10.00 Carol Smith  
**PM**  
1.00 Charmaine Yee  
4.00 Shan Wee  
8.00 Joshi's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

**AM**  
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman  
10.00 Cheryl Miles  
**PM**  
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM

MONEY FM 89.3

**AM**  
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang  
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim  
**PM**  
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro  
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

**AM**  
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu  
10.00 Lively Life With Kemlin  
**PM**  
1.00 Tea With Yuling  
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong  
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

**AM**  
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi  
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna  
**PM**  
1.00 Automation  
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian  
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.15am/7.18pm  
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 9.32pm/9.04am

**TIDES TODAY:** Singapore: 1.09am (3m), 6.26am (1.4m), 12.11pm (3.4m), 6.56pm (0.2m). Desaru: 12.45am (3m), 6.09am (1.8m), 11.20am (2.8m), 6.11pm (0.4m). Port Dickson: 2.46am (0.1m), 8.10am (2.8m), 3.28pm (0.2m), 8.48pm (2.8m). Mersing: 6.17am (1.9m), 10.50am (2.6m), 5.37pm (0.5m).

**TIDES TOMORROW:** Singapore: 1.50am (3m), 7.16am (1.3m), 1pm (3.4m), 7.48pm (0.3m). Desaru: 1.26am (3m), 6.52am (1.7m), 12.16pm (2.8m), 6.58pm (0.5m). Port Dickson: 3.34am (0.1m), 8.53am (2.7m), 4.04pm (0.2m), 9.28pm (2.8m). Mersing: 12.52am (3.5m), 7.03am (1.8m), 11.48am (2.6m), 6.24pm (0.6m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg



Dating rumour #1



Rumour has it that actors Brad Pitt and Charlize Theron (both above) had paired up over Christmas. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

# Brad Pitt and Charlize Theron an item?

LOS ANGELES • Brad Pitt has had romances with two high-profile actresses – Jennifer Aniston and Angelina Jolie. Is he now going for a romantic hat trick with another big name – Charlize Theron? A source recently told the Sun newspaper that the duo had paired up over Christmas and had spent a lot of time in his California mansion. “They were ridiculously touchy-

feely and his arm was around her back. They both looked really happy,” the source said. But People magazine has pooh-poohed such talk. While Pitt, 55, and Theron, 43, did work together six months ago on an advertising shoot for Breitling watches, a source said: “They have not been out together recently and were never dating. “Reports of them being involved romantically are false.”

Pitt has been relatively quiet in the dating game since he and Jolie went their separate ways in 2016. Theron – who bagged a Golden Globe best actress nomination for Tully (2018) – aborted her engagement to actor Sean Penn in 2015. So are there love sparks between Pitt and Theron? “They are both very single at the moment, so it’s no surprise people are talking romance. They truly would make a Hollywood power

couple but, at this point, they’re friends,” a source told the Entertainment Tonight portal. “At the moment, he is all about his career and his children. He is working on several projects and spends every moment he can with his kids.” Pitt recently finished work in Quentin Tarantino’s Once Upon A Time In Hollywood, which also stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Margot Robbie.

Dating rumour #2

South Korean stars Son Ye-jin and Hyun Bin are just friends, says Hyun’s management agency. PHOTO: HYUN BIN/ INSTAGRAM



# Hyun Bin, Son Ye-jin deny they are dating

SEOUL • The two South Korean stars – Hyun Bin and Son Ye-jin – did meet up in a supermarket in the United States, but were not shopping for items to whip up a romantic meal. And the duo were with other acquaintances, the actor’s management agency clarified, dousing talk that the pair are dating. Speculation of a romance surfaced after the two – who co-starred in 2018 film The Negotiation – were spotted together in the United States earlier this month, various Korean media reported. Son, 37, is taking a vacation in the US while Hyun, 36, is spending time

abroad for personal reasons. Hyun’s agency said: “We checked with him personally and the dating rumours are not true. “He heard earlier that Son is currently in the US, so they met up together with acquaintances and went grocery shopping together. “The misunderstanding seems to have occurred as the two are close friends of the same age, and it was magnified because Hyun and Son are famous figures.” Son was also said to be in a relationship a few months ago with Jung Hae-in, 30, her co-star in 2018 TV romantic comedy Something In The Rain.

# Two Razzie worst actor nods for Donald Trump

LOS ANGELES • Mr Donald Trump has two chances to win an award which no one in Hollywood wants – the Razzie. The United States President got two worst actor nominations on Monday for appearing as himself in 2018 documentaries Death Of A Nation, from conservative film-maker Dinesh D’Souza, and liberal Michael Moore’s Fahrenheit 11/9. The tongue-in-cheek Razzies, created in 1980, serve as an antidote to Hollywood’s Oscars ceremony. The Sherlock Holmes comedy Holmes & Watson garnered six mentions, including worst film, worst actor for Will Ferrell and worst supporting actor for John C. Reilly. The two stars were cited for “trashing two of literature’s most beloved characters”. Gotti, about late mafia boss John Gotti, also notched six nods, including worst screen combo for John Travolta and his wife Kelly Preston, and worst film. Oscar winner Helen Mirren was not spared either, bagging her first Razzie nomination for worst actress for her role in horror movie Winchester. She will face competition from Melissa McCarthy, who could be an Oscar contender this year for her role in Can You Ever Forgive Me?. McCarthy is paying the price for taking on underwhelming roles in two films, The Happytime Murders and Life Of The Party. Nominees and winners of the Razzies are voted for online by about 1,000 Razzie members from 24 countries, Reuters reported. Winners – if they turn up – will be given trophies at a ceremony held



On the eve of the Feb 24 Oscars. Will Ferrell (left) and John C. Reilly both received worst acting nods for their roles in Holmes & Watson. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

# Bras’ restaurant gets 2 Michelin stars despite request to be left out

PARIS • French chef Sebastien Bras, who had shocked the culinary world by handing back his Michelin stars, was stunned on Monday to find himself back in the prestigious guide’s new edition with two stars. He cited the “huge pressure” that came with the recognition when he asked in September 2017 for his three-star restaurant Le Suquet to be left out of the 2018 guide. “This contradictory decision has left us with doubts, even if in any case we no longer worry about either the stars or the strategies of the guide,” he said in a statement sent to Agence France-Presse. He took over the kitchen at Le

Suquet from his father Michel a decade ago. The elder Bras had held three Michelin stars since 1999, and his son said that knowing a single below-par dish could cost him his reputation had created unbearable pressure as a chef. “You’re inspected two or three times a year, you never know when,” he said in 2017. “That means that every day, one of the 500 meals that leave the kitchen could be judged. Maybe I will be less famous, but I accept that,” he noted of dropping out of the Michelin guide. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

# On social media

NO MAKE-UP DAY: Jennifer Lopez (right) can still turn plenty of heads, even without any make-up on her face. Indeed, her cosmetic-free selfie – taken during a winter holiday in Miami – has drawn 2.3 million likes after the 49-year-old singer-actress shared it on Instagram, with the caption #NoFilterFriday #NoMakeupDay #LoveMeAsIAm. Fans, who raved about her natural beauty, said the photo was a nice departure from the shots taken by paparazzi that usually showed her all dolled-up at high-profile events. Lopez’s about-face may have something to do with her acceptance to live in her own skin. She recently told Harper’s Bazaar that, despite her 30-plus years in show business, she had only recently become more secure of her own identity. Another celebrity, singer Kesha (right), 31, has also chosen to live life on her own terms. Last week, in a photo posted online that showed her face covered with freckles, she said: “This year my resolution is to love myself... just as I am... imperfect and whatever else.” That image has got more than half a million likes. PHOTOS: JENNIFER LOPEZ/INSTAGRAM, KESHA/INSTAGRAM



# In short

## Hoodie SZN tops Billboard for second week

Rapper A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie holds the top spot on the Billboard chart for a second week with his Hoodie SZN album. The soundtrack to Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse is at No. 2 while 21 Savage’s I Am I Was takes third place.

## Bruno Sialelli designs for Lanvin

A little-known, 31-year-old French fashion designer has been handed the keys to Lanvin, the oldest couture house of all. Bruno Sialelli, who has worked for Loewe, Balenciaga and Acne Studios, is the fourth creative director to head the troubled brand in four years.

Library talks by seasoned journalists

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Lee Siew Hua  
Travel Writer,  
The Straits Times



# B| HOME



**STUART KOE**  
FRIDAE.COM FOUNDER CONSUMED  
DRUGS WHILE OUT ON BAIL B2



The Sejarah Melayu, or Malay Annals, was printed in Singapore in the 1840s and edited by Munsyi Abdullah, a scribe for Sir Stamford Raffles. There are only five known copies of the book that exist in public institutions today – two in the United States Library of Congress and one each in Malaysia and Indonesia. The National Library Board bought the fifth copy of the book from the private collection of a British library. It goes on display with other rare books today at NLB's Victoria Street premises until March 24. ST PHOTO: SAHIBA CHAUDHARY

## Flight diverted after man punches another

A Scoot flight from Gold Coast to Singapore was diverted to Sydney Airport because of a disruption caused by an unruly passenger on board.

Flight TR7 was scheduled to reach Singapore at 3.15pm on Monday, but was diverted just one hour and 20 minutes into the eight-hour flight.

In a statement on Monday, Scoot said an Australian man on board had punched another passenger. Crew members and other passengers stepped in to break up the fight. "The man was eventually subdued with two restraining kits, with the help of five passengers," the airline added.

A decision was made to divert the flight to Sydney, where the man was handed over to local law enforcement. According to Australian newspaper Brisbane Times, he was met by Australian Federal Police and paramedics at Sydney Airport.

The assaulted passenger told crew members on board that he did not require medical attention.

Passengers were transferred to alternative flights bound for Singapore. The airline said: "In Singapore, Scoot representatives will be meeting with arriving customers to assist them where necessary."

Scoot said the man had appeared normal during boarding and take-off, but began disturbing surrounding passengers after take-off.

The Australian Federal Police told Australian media that a disruptive male passenger was taken into custody at Sydney Airport on Monday from a Scoot flight that departed from Gold Coast. Charges have not been filed against him, Australian media said.

Mr Rico David Garilli, who was on the flight, posted a video of the incident on Facebook. In the video, the unruly man is seen punching another passenger and putting him in a headlock.

Mr Garilli and several other passengers who shared the video on Facebook said the man started drinking after a delay in the flight was announced. In response to queries from The Straits Times yesterday, Scoot said the first delay "was due to a technical issue".

"Scoot will refuse to transport any passenger who is deemed a risk to the safety of the flight," it said. "We apologise for the unpleasantness and inconvenience experienced by the other passengers."

Choo Yun Ting

## Rare book on early S'pore stories back in Republic

NLB buys Munsyi Abdullah's edition of Malay Annals from UK library; it goes on show today

**Melody Zaccheus**  
Heritage and Community  
Correspondent

A book that holds the stories of early Singapore, including Sang Nila Utama's experience on the island when he arrived in 1299, has made its way back to the Republic.

The Sejarah Melayu, or Malay Annals, was printed in Singapore in the 1840s and edited by Munsyi Abdullah, a scribe for Sir Stamford Raffles.

There are only five known copies of the book that exist in public institutions today.

Two are now with the United States Library of Congress. An American expedition (1838-1842) which stopped in Singapore had acquired the books.

Public institutions in Malaysia and Indonesia own one each.

The fifth copy of the book was part of the private collection of a British library. Late last year, the National Library Board (NLB) acquired the book. NLB said it was unable to disclose the price.

Speaking to The Straits Times, associate librarian Nadirah Norrudin, 27, said NLB is "very lucky and fortunate" to acquire the hardcover book which she described to be in "good condition". It is not known how the book ended up in Britain and how many hands it went through in its journey across seas.

The rare publication will go on show for the first time in Singapore today as part of NLB's efforts to mark the bicentennial of Raffles'

founding of modern Singapore in 1819.

The book is the centrepiece of a showcase called The First Print: Stories And Legends Of Early Singapore which runs till March 24 at NLB's Victoria Street premises.

The showcase will then move to four other libraries with a digital version of the book, until Oct 31.

"We have always been on the look out for rare items printed here or in the region that contain materials related to our island and its surrounds because we feel that Singaporeans should have access to such materials," said Ms Nadirah.

Abdullah, a scholar who is also known as the father of modern Malay literature, had pieced the publication together from six handwritten manuscripts detailing the history and genealogy of the Malay kings of the Malacca Sultanate (1400-1511).

The book also contains the stories of strongman Badang, among other stories. The oldest surviving manuscript dates back to 1612.

The Munsyi Abdullah edition, written in Jawi (a modified Arabic script to express the Malay language), was sent to the printing press so students of Malay language and literature, as well as the island's local population could access stories of their past.

Prior to Abdullah's edition, stories from the Malay Annals were largely confined to being read out in court settings to elites, including the Sultanate's rulers, said Ms Nadirah.

On the Abdullah version, she said: "It was very revolutionary as the first thoroughly researched printed text of the Malay Annals because it meant that laymen now had access to it themselves."

"Munsyi believed the text was the paragon of Malay literature because the language was so refined and vivid. He felt that more people should be able to read it because it was so important to the history and culture of the region."

She added that the Abdullah version is considered the standard to which generations of scholars and students refer to.

The Sejarah Melayu is one of the earliest surviving documentations of Temasek-Singapura. It is not known how many copies of Abdullah's Sejarah Melayu were printed by Mission Press.

Singapore's early printing history is closely tied to early 1800s Protestant missionary work in the region.

Apart from the Sejarah Melayu, the Mission Press took on commercial jobs, printed textbooks and provided printing services for the government.

The NLB's showcase will also display later versions of the Sejarah Melayu, which was translated by other writers into other languages and taught in schools.

Among them is scholar and missionary William Shellabear's romanised Malay edition of the Sejarah Melayu which was based on Abdullah's version. Shellabear's edition was later reprinted and taught in vernacular schools across the Straits Settlements.

In 1946, scholar Hsu Yun Tsiao translated the annals into Chinese.

This version became an assigned text in the late 1950s at the then Nanyang University.

Ms Nadirah said the Sejarah Melayu provides evidence of Singapore as a well-known city. She notes that six of 34 chapters in Abdullah's Sejarah Melayu contain the ancient Malay Sultanate's accounts of Singapore. For instance, Chapter 3 notes that "the country of Singapore is of great extent and frequented by merchants from every quarter and its ports are populous".

Heritage blogger Jerome Lim said the showcase could create greater awareness about the Malay Annals and the various versions that exist.

"It also helps Singaporeans recognise the significance of the annals and how the stories... provide us with a sense that the island's importance goes well beyond the 200 years of its modern history."

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Research assistant Sharanya Ramanan showing how MRegen works, with Associate Professor Alfredo Franco-Obregon. The machine's prototype resembles a miniature MRI scanner that is large enough for a person to insert one leg. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG



# NUS team creates magnetic device to aid muscle recovery

**Trial on knee op patients shows they regain normal muscle size and strength faster**

**Rei Kurohi**

A team of researchers at the National University of Singapore (NUS) has created a device that uses magnetic fields to simulate the biological effects of exercise and promote muscle recovery.

The device, called MRegen, stimulates the muscles in a user's leg with a specific magnetic signature. This releases molecules called myokines, typically produced during muscle contractions, which create metabolic activity in the cells similar to when a person exercises.

The team of 12 researchers was led by Associate Professor Alfredo Franco-Obregon from the Biomedical Institute for Global Health Research and Technology at NUS and the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine's surgery department.

The researchers chose to target the user's leg because of its muscle tissue density, but the magnetic signature can be adjusted to target other kinds of tissue or organs, said Prof Franco-Obregon during a media briefing yesterday.

The release of myokines can trigger positive effects elsewhere in the body. For example, they can promote blood vessel and bone growth, reduce bodily inflammation and promote fat-burning. Between 2015 and 2017, the team conducted two clinical trials.

The first involved 10 healthy volunteers who received 10 minutes of the treatment in one leg once a

week for five weeks. By the end of the trial, they showed a 30 per cent to 40 per cent improvement in muscle strength in both legs.

The second trial involved 20 patients who had undergone anterior cruciate ligament knee surgery.

Half of them were treated with MRegen for 10 minutes a week, in addition to their normal rehabilitation therapy for four months following surgery.

Prof Franco-Obregon said: "The results were very positive. For those who received the magnetic field treatment, bone mineral density went up. Signs of muscle degeneration went down while signs of muscle growth went up."

He added that those who used MRegen regained their normal muscle size and strength about a month earlier on average than those who had undergone only normal rehabilitation therapy.

Magnetic resonance imaging

(MRI) scans also showed that their muscle metabolism, which indicates muscle health and regenerative capacity, had improved by up to 50 per cent.

The prototype of the MRegen machine resembles a miniature MRI scanner that is large enough for a person to insert one leg.

The user does not feel anything while it is in operation.

The treatment should be used in conjunction with physical exercise instead of replacing it, but it can be helpful in a clinical setting and for elderly people or patients who have undergone surgery, said Prof Franco-Obregon.

"Although exercise is extremely important, it comes at a cost because of the mechanical stress it places on the cells. Energy has to go to repair the muscle before it can benefit. This treatment produces no mechanical stress."

The team has filed a patent for its invention and created a company called QuantumTX to take the device to the market.

Prof Franco-Obregon said the team will conduct trials with elderly volunteers this year and is aiming to develop a commercial version of the device for use in eldercare facilities by next year.

It will cost about \$10,000 to \$30,000, and a user can expect to pay between \$10 and \$20 per 10-minute session.

Prof Franco-Obregon said that future trials will explore the technology's application in obesity management and disease treatment.

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HIGHER BONE MINERAL DENSITY

**The results were very positive. For those who received the magnetic field treatment, bone mineral density went up. Signs of muscle degeneration went down while signs of muscle growth went up.**



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ALFREDO FRANCO-OBREGON**, on MRegen's effects.

NO MECHANICAL STRESS

**Although exercise is extremely important, it comes at a cost because of the mechanical stress it places on the cells. Energy has to go to repair the muscle before it can benefit. This treatment produces no mechanical stress.**



**PROF FRANCO-OBREGON**, on how the treatment can be helpful in a clinical setting and for elderly people or patients who have undergone surgery.

## Beware of tech support scams: Police

**Ng Huiwen**

Victims lost more than \$28,000 last year after they were tricked into buying software for fake computer virus infections, police said yesterday.

Latest figures released by the police also showed that at least four reports of such tech support scams have been made so far this year.

There have been at least two variants of such scams, said police, who have cautioned the public against falling for such tricks.

In the first variant, victims see a pop-up message on their computer screens saying their computers have been infected with a virus, or their passwords and information could have been leaked.

They are then provided with a toll-free telephone number to contact to resolve the issue.

During the call, victims speak to operators claiming to be employees from tech companies such as Microsoft or Apple.

They are then directed to a website and advised to download an application or enter commands into their computers. These actions allow scammers to gain remote access to victims' computers, which they can then control.

In the second variant of the scam, victims receive unsolicited calls from individuals informing them that their bank account details have been compromised. They are told that money has been transferred out of their accounts.

Victims are then told to download an application or software to allow the caller to gain access to the victims' computers, so that they can receive help.

In most of the cases, the scammers told victims that they needed to purchase "anti-virus software" to fix their computers.

The victims were asked to transfer money or provide personal particulars, such as their NRIC number as well as credit and debit card details, to facilitate the purchase. The scammers then made unauthorised transactions.

Some have also allowed the scammers to access their e-mail accounts by providing their passwords, allowing scammers to misuse their e-mail accounts to commit other scams.

To provide information on such scams, call the police hotline on 1800-255-0000, or visit [www.police.gov.sg/iwitness](http://www.police.gov.sg/iwitness).

For scam-related advice, call the anti-scam helpline on 1800-722-6688 or go to [www.scamalert.sg](http://www.scamalert.sg).

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## Fridae.com founder consumed drugs while out on bail

**Shaffiq Alkhatib**

Being convicted and sentenced for drug trafficking last year did not deter Fridae.com founder Stuart Koe Chi Yeow from abusing narcotics.

The founder of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender news and social networking website was arrested on July 10 last year while out on bail, pending an appeal against his earlier conviction and sentence. His urine sample was found to

have contained traces of methamphetamine.

Koe, 46, was sentenced to a year and a month's jail yesterday after pleading guilty to one count each of drug consumption as well as being in possession of drug paraphernalia

and nimetazepam, or Erimin-5.

He will start serving this sentence after completing the one from last March, when District Judge Olivia Low found him guilty of one count of drug trafficking and sentenced him to five years and nine months' jail with five strokes of the cane.

Yesterday, Deputy Public Prosecutor Shana Poon told the court that Justice Chan Seng Onn dismissed Koe's appeals on Sept 21 last year and he started serving his sentence later that day.

He was found to be unfit for caning about two months later.

DPP Poon did not reveal the reason behind this decision.

The court heard that officers from the Central Narcotics Bureau raided Koe's Spottiswoode Park Road home at around 2pm on March 23, 2016, and arrested him.

The officers conducted a search and uncovered items such as a fragment of a tablet - later found to contain nimetazepam - and a glass pipe attached to a rubber tube.

On Aug 25, 2016, Koe sold one packet of a crystalline substance containing 0.17g of Ice for \$240 to a drug abuser and was convicted of this offence last year.

While out on bail, officers arrested Koe in a room at the Capri by Fraser Changi City hotel in Changi Business Park Central 1 last July. His urine sample was later found to contain traces of methamphetamine.

Defence lawyer Sunil Sudheesan told District Judge Shaifudin Saruwan yesterday that his client has learnt his lesson.

The lawyer added: "Give him some hope to start afresh."

ashaffiq@sph.com.sg



Stuart Koe Chi Yeow was arrested while out on bail, pending an appeal against his earlier conviction and sentence for drug trafficking. ST FILE PHOTO

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# Doubts over effectiveness of WhatsApp's text-forwarding curb

Observers say that while spread of fake news will be slowed, there are ways to get around the restriction

**Linette Lai and Rachel Au-Yong**  
Political Correspondents

A move by messaging service WhatsApp to limit the number of times users can forward a message would slow the spread of fake news, said observers, though some cautioned that malicious senders could still get around the restriction.

Previously, users could forward a message to 20 individuals or groups. WhatsApp has now reduced the number to five.

This, in effect, "dents" the total number of people who can receive a forwarded message, said Dr Lau Jing Feng, who heads the Singapore University of Social Sciences' (SUSS) mathematics programme.

WhatsApp's parent company, Facebook, has come under fire over its role in the spread of fake news around the world.

The new limit was first rolled out in India six months ago, after the spread of kidnapping rumours on social media led to at least 20 people being killed in lynching attacks.

Under the new limit, for example, if a message is forwarded to five people, who each forward it to five more people, 30 people would have seen the message.

This is only 7 per cent, compared with the old forwarding limit, where 420 people would have seen the message if 20 people got the message and forwarded it to 20 others.

If the 30 recipients were to continue forwarding it, it would reach only 155 people in total. This is just under 2 per cent of the 8,000 people who would have seen it otherwise.

However, Senior Parliamentary Secretary Sun Xueling, who sat on a Parliamentary Select Committee that examined the problem of fake news last year, said that malicious senders could, for example, put a

network in place or use bots to "cascade the message, five persons at a time". "State-sponsored actors who want to start a hostile information campaign have the capabilities to do so," she said.

Professor Ang Peng Hwa from the Nanyang Technological University's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information cited a report suggesting that last year's Brazilian elections were affected by a misinformation campaign.

"I can envisage tighter regulations for a time, say during an election's campaign period," he said, pointing to the report's suggestion that WhatsApp limit the size of new groups created during such periods.

Dr Wang Yue, who heads SUSS' business administration programme, said limits do not resolve the fundamental problem since the messages can still be retyped or sent to groups, which can contain as many as 256 people.

He suggested using algorithms to identify and delay the sending of suspicious messages and flagging suspicious messages to a recipient.

His colleague, Dr Lau, said a more

effective way of controlling the spread of fake news remains educating people and encouraging them to verify information first.

According to a poll by government feedback unit Reach in 2017, Facebook and WhatsApp were the two main sources of bogus news here.

Marketing manager Celine Lim, 28, said she was doubtful about the effectiveness of the measure.

"Before the 'forward' button, there was the 'copy-and-paste' method. Nothing's stopping a well-meaning but uninformed uncle from sharing the latest conspiracy theory in the family chat," she said.

But digital marketing strategist Ryan Lim said that mathematically, the role of an individual in spreading all types of news is now limited.

"The power is now being swayed back to organisations with more resources to stop disinformation," he said. "If the users feel WhatsApp is not effective, they will move to other alternatives."

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**Under the new limit, for example, if a message is forwarded to five people, who each forward it to five more people, 30 people would have seen the message. This is only 7 per cent, compared with the old forwarding limit, where 420 people would have seen the message if 20 people got the message and forwarded it to 20 others.**



The crowd at Sembawang MRT station yesterday. A train travelling towards Jurong East had stalled near Marsiling station due to a fault with its signalling equipment. PHOTO: HENG WEY CHUAN/FACEBOOK

## Hour-long train fault causes delay on North-South Line

**Ng Huiwen**

Commuters on the North-South Line faced delays during their morning commute yesterday because of a train fault at Marsiling MRT station that lasted about an hour.

Replying to queries, train operator SMRT said a train travelling towards Jurong East stalled near Marsiling station at about 7.50am due to a fault with its signalling equipment.

SMRT also said in a tweet at about

8am that commuters should add 30 minutes of travelling time from Woodlands to Yew Tee, in the direction of Jurong East.

It added that free regular bus services between Woodlands and Yew Tee would be available for affected commuters.

In an update at about 8.30am, SMRT said commuters should add 15 minutes to their train journeys. This was later cut to 10 minutes.

SMRT vice-president of corporate communications Margaret Teo told The Straits Times that another

train was activated immediately to push the faulty train to the station platform for commuters to disembark safely.

The faulty train was then hauled back to the depot for further checks, she said, adding that train service resumed progressively from 8.35am.

"We apologise to commuters whose morning commute was affected by the incident," she added.

An hour after its first announcement, the train operator said on Twitter that the fault had cleared.

Free regular bus services between Woodlands and Yew Tee ended after train services between the stretch resumed, SMRT said.

Earlier, several netizens took to social media to share their frustration over the delay, which happened during the morning peak period.

Facebook user Heng Wey Chuan posted a photo at about 8am showing a large crowd on the platform of Sembawang MRT station.

He said that there was an announcement at the station notifying commuters of the delay.

While SMRT has said that only trains towards Jurong East were affected, several commuters reported that trains travelling in the direction of Marina Bay appeared to be delayed as well.

Twitter user Hadi Abdul, who shared photos of the scene at Marsiling station, said that trains travelling in both directions were slow.

He said that he saw some commuters alighting from the train to take cabs instead.

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## Monday's Wi-Fi incident at schools a technical issue: MOE

**Jolene Ang**

Teachers in some schools across Singapore were unable to boot up or connect their computers to their schools' Wi-Fi networks on Monday afternoon.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) told The Straits Times yesterday that it was a technical issue.

MOE chief information officer Tan Bee Teck said: "Once alerted, MOE investigated the case and confirmed that it was due to a glitch in the device configuration system, and thus ascertained that it was not a cybersecurity incident."

He added that the issue was resolved as of 3pm on Monday.

Several teachers, who declined to be named, took to Facebook that afternoon to share that their Internet access was down.

HardwareZone, a website for technology-related discussions and updates, said the glitch began at around noon.

"Some teachers... faced an issue of not being able to log in on their work laptops. A pop-up appears with a sad face," wrote one user, crediting a source who was on the staff at one of the schools affected.

MOE said about 5 per cent of users across 234 schools were affected.

Mr Tan said: "MOE is working with schools to get the affected devices' system configuration updated."

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PERSONAL AMBITION NO EXCUSE

**We do not see how being consumed about wanting a particular career mitigates the offences of forgery of one's academic credentials.**



JUDGE OF APPEAL TAY YONG KWANG

## Young lawyer struck off the rolls for forging degree results

**Selina Lum**  
Law Correspondent

A young lawyer hoping to improve her chances of getting a job in the Singapore Legal Service submitted a forged transcript that reflected better grades in 2013. The 25-year-old did not land the job.

When Ms Jaya Anil Kumar applied a second time more than three years later, she doctored her National University of Singapore (NUS) law degree certificate.

Yesterday, Ms Jaya, now 30, was struck off the rolls.

Called to the Bar in July 2012, she had not applied for a practising certificate since August 2014.

The Law Society referred her case to the Court of Three Judges, which can suspend or disbar lawyers, after she was fined \$10,000 in January last year for using forged documents.

Handing down the court's decision to strike her off, Judge of Appeal Tay Yong Kwang said her conduct showed "a consistent trend of

resorting to dishonest means" to get the job she wanted.

"We do not see how being consumed about wanting a particular career mitigates the offences of forgery of one's academic credentials," he added.

The court, which also comprised justices Belinda Ang and Quentin Loh, said the criminal acts were "grave and indefensible" but noted that Ms Jaya was capable of change.

"During the coming years, she will have to reorder her young life, refocus on what is truly important,

show the fruits of repentance and make a good case for the court to reinstate her as an advocate and solicitor some time in the future."

Ms Jaya graduated from NUS in 2011 with a Second Class (Lower) law degree. After she was called to the Bar, she was retained at a large law firm.

In January 2013, she applied to the Legal Service Commission (LSC), submitting a doctored transcript that reflected better grades for 21 out of 27 subjects. She landed an interview but was not offered a job.

In October 2016, she altered her degree to state that she had a Second Class (Upper) degree, as well as her transcript to reflect better grades for 18 out of 27 subjects.

When the LSC secretariat contacted her to seek her consent to ask NUS for her class and and percentile rankings, she declined.

Asked about the differences in the documents for both applications, she claimed she had "mis-scanned" them and might have mixed up the documents with a friend's.

That evening, she e-mailed her genuine documents to the secretariat, which made a police report.

Yesterday, the Law Society, represented by Ms Smitha Menon, asked for a striking off, which is typically warranted when lawyers are convicted of offences involving dishonesty.

Ms Jaya's lawyer, Mr Abraham Vergis, sought a suspension, arguing that she was "redeemable". He told the court that she was young and inexperienced at the time and that she was motivated by her dream to pursue a career in international law.

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# Trio charged in insurance fraud case

Chiropractor, 2 agents linked to \$14,000 in fake claims to Manulife

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A chiropractor was taken to court yesterday after he allegedly worked with two insurance agents to cheat Manulife Singapore of more than \$14,000 by submitting bogus personal accident claims for 12 people covered by the insurer.

Charles Loo Boon Ann, 29, shareholder of Chiropractic Focus Group, is accused of committing the of-



(From left) Charles Loo Boon Ann, Mike Chew Jun Yong and Priscilla Tien Ling allegedly cheated Manulife Singapore of over \$14,000 by submitting bogus personal accident claims for 12 people covered by the insurer. ST PHOTOS: WONG KWAI CHOW

fences with Priscilla Tien Ling, 27, and Mike Chew Jun Yong, 36.

Loo was charged with 17 counts of cheating while Tien faces 12 charges for similar offences. Chew was handed nine cheating charges.

A search on the General Insur-

ance Association Of Singapore's website revealed that Chew is still a general and life insurance agent, currently linked to Liberty Insurance.

Information on Tien was not found on the portal.

The trio allegedly committed their offences between June 2017 and April last year.

Manulife Singapore is said to have been duped into delivering the monies to the 12 insurance policyholders.

They allegedly received between \$200 and \$1,200 each.

Tien's cases allegedly involved nine policyholders who received more than \$8,000 in all.

Five policyholders linked to Chew are said to have received about \$7,000 in total.

It was not mentioned in court yesterday if action will be taken against the 12 policyholders.

In a statement on Monday, the police said the trio allegedly cheated the insurance firm through false personal accident claims for treatments at Loo's clinics in Tampines and Tanjong Pagar.

The police added that investigations showed "the trio were believed to have conspired with one another to instigate patients receiving treatment for pre-existing medical conditions at the chiropractor's clinics to purchase personal accident insurance policies".

"The patients could then make false personal accident claims against the insurance policies, for injuries purportedly sustained after they bought the policies, in order to receive payout from the insurance company for their chiropractic treatment," the police said.

Yesterday, the trio were each offered bail of \$15,000 and they will be back in court on Feb 19.

For each count of cheating, offenders can be jailed for up to 10 years and fined.

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## Two robbers linked to alleged rape get jail

What started as a robbery took a darker turn when the victim was allegedly raped by one of the culprits who was only 17 years old at the time.

Mendel See Li Quan, a Malaysian, is accused of raping the 53-year-old Singaporean woman, who was robbed in a Yishun flat in October 2017.

The two other robbers linked to this case were sentenced to jail yesterday.

Benjamin Yong Dun Zheng was sentenced to three years and six months' jail, with 12 strokes of the cane. His girlfriend, Chow Chia Suan, was jailed for four years.

The two 23-year-old Singaporeans pleaded guilty to one count each of robbery, cheating and theft. The cases involving See are still pending.

Yesterday, Deputy Public Prosecutor Sruthi Boppana told the court that the victim was a sex worker who served her clients at their homes.

The court heard that on Oct 1, 2017, See contacted the victim, asking for sexual services. She then asked a Filipino woman to meet him. DPP Sruthi said See became angry when the Filipina failed to turn up and decided to "take revenge" against the victim.

According to court documents, he used Chow's phone the next day and contacted the victim, offering her \$900 for her services.

Arrangements were also made for them to meet at Yong's home in Yishun, and the woman arrived at around 10pm that day.

The DPP said that once inside the flat, See yanked the woman's bag away and pointed a chopper at her, ordering her to remain still.

The terrified woman did as she was told.

DPP Sruthi added: "Mendel grabbed her neck with his hand and pushed her against the wall... Mendel then pointed the chopper at her face, shouting at her not to move and to squat down. The victim was very scared and sat down."

Chow looked through her bag and removed items, including two mobile phones and \$100 in cash.

The court heard that See then told the woman to undress. He also told Yong and Chow to leave the room before closing the door, said the DPP.

The couple did not know what he did in the room, but the woman emerged less than 30 minutes later and left the flat without her valuables. She alerted the police once she reached home.

Besides this case, Chow and Yong admitted that they had cheated Chow's mother of \$300.

They also stole \$670 in cash from a beauty therapist.

The court heard that See is also allegedly linked to these two cases.

Shaffiq Alkhatib

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### Art blooms in NTU



Renowned Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto unveiled a living art installation on the curving green roof of Nanyang Technological University (NTU) School of Art, Design and Media yesterday. The conceptual artwork, Third Paradise, is his first such installation in Asia, and he used the red sessile joyweed plant, an edible local shrub used to make herbal tea, to form three large connecting circles. The artwork here is one of his global installations, and each of his installations has been created with different materials. The artwork in NTU will be displayed until Feb 10 and is supported by art gallery Partners & Mucciaccia.

ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

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# Gay rights champion makes legal challenge against Section 377A

## Activist argues that criminalisation of sex between men inconsistent with Constitution

**Shaffiq Alkhatib**

An LGBT rights advocate has filed a case against the Attorney-General, stating that Section 377A of the Penal Code – which criminalises sex between men – is “inconsistent” with portions of Singapore’s Constitution, and “is therefore void”.

Mr Choong Chee Hong, better known as Bryan Choong, filed it at the Supreme Court in November last year.

Mr Choong, 41, is the former executive director of Oogachaga, a non-profit organisation working with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

According to court documents, Mr Choong stated that Section 377A is inconsistent with Article 9 of the Constitution, which states: “No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty save in accordance with law.”

The two other portions deemed “inconsistent” are: Article 12, which states that all persons are equal before the law and entitled to its equal protection; and Article 14, which states that every citizen of Singapore has the right to freedom of speech and expression.

Article 14 also states that all citizens of Singapore “have the right to assemble peaceably and without arms” and have the “right to form associations”.

Mr Choong, who declined to be interviewed, is represented by Senior Counsel Harpreet Singh Nehal from Cavenagh Law, as well as a team from Peter Low and Choo law firm.

They are lawyers Remy Choo Zheng Xi, Priscilla Chia Wen Qi and Wong Thai Yong.

Responding to queries from The Straits Times, the Attorney-General’s Chambers (AGC) said it has received the papers and is studying them.

The AGC spokesman added: “We are unable to comment further as the matter is now before the courts.”

On Sept 10 last year, a disc jockey also filed a court challenge against Section 377A, arguing that the law is unconstitutional.

Mr Johnson Ong Ming, then 43, who goes by the stage name DJ Big Kid, filed his challenge four days after India’s Supreme Court struck down a similar law.

That decision sparked a renewed debate on Section 377A in Singapore, with camps on both sides starting petitions either to keep the law or repeal it.

In the wake of the Indian decision, Professor Tommy Koh, the Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also suggested that a new attempt be made to challenge Section 377A in the courts.

A legal challenge to strike down Section 377A failed in 2014, when the highest court in Singapore rejected that the provision was unconstitutional.

Gay couple Gary Lim and Kenneth Chee as well as Mr Tan Eng Hong had then argued that the provision was discriminatory.

Mr Choong’s and Mr Ong’s cases are still pending.

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# Man jailed for arranging sham marriages, harbouring Viet ‘wives’

**Cara Wong**

Within months of their first meetings, the Singaporean-Vietnamese couples solemnised their weddings at a restaurant, as organised by their “matchmaker” Tan Chuen Zin, 42.

But the men and women went their separate ways immediately after the wedding, with the Vietnamese “wives” renting Tan’s apartment for \$530 each every month.

The sham marriages were discovered by the authorities, and Tan was jailed for 1½ years and fined \$13,000 last Friday for arranging two marriages of convenience and harbouring the Vietnamese women.

He was caught in March 2017 after the two “couples” he matchmade were arrested by Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) officials a month before, said the ICA in a statement yesterday.

The two Singaporean men had approached Tan in May 2016, as they were both in financial difficulties.

David Sim, 52, asked Tan for job recommendations, but he offered Sim a marriage of convenience scheme instead that could bag Sim \$4,000, and \$300 for every successful extension of his “wife’s” visit pass.



Tan Chuen Zin has been jailed for 1½ years and fined \$13,000 for his offences.

**The maximum penalty for arranging or entering into a marriage of convenience is a fine of up to \$10,000 and a jail term of up to 10 years.**

Sim was matched to Vietnamese Tran Thuy Bich Tran, 24, in July that year, after she was advised by Tan to get married to extend her stay in Singapore.

She paid Tan, a Singaporean, \$9,000 for the marriage, and was to pay him the subsequent \$300 for every successful extension of her pass.

Tan Jian You, 27, who also told Tan Chuen Zin of his financial difficulties, was offered \$1,500 for a marriage of convenience.

His “wife” was Vietnamese

woman Vo Thi Diem Kieu, 23, who also paid Tan Chuen Zin \$9,000 for the marriage.

Both “wives” lived in Tan Chuen Zin’s apartment after their solemnisation ceremonies in November that year, and each paid him \$530 every month for rental.

But on Feb 20, 2017, the two couples were arrested by ICA officers. Tan Chuen Zin was arrested the next month.

Both couples were sentenced to six months’ jail in 2017 for entering into sham marriages and making false statements in their visit pass applications.

Last year, the ICA busted at least two sham marriage syndicates, which involved a total of 31 people, among them 13 fake married couples.

The ICA said: “ICA takes a serious view of individuals trying to circumvent our system by engaging in, arranging or assisting to arrange marriages of convenience to obtain immigration facilities in Singapore.”

The maximum penalty for arranging or entering into a marriage of convenience is a fine of up to \$10,000 and a jail term of up to 10 years.

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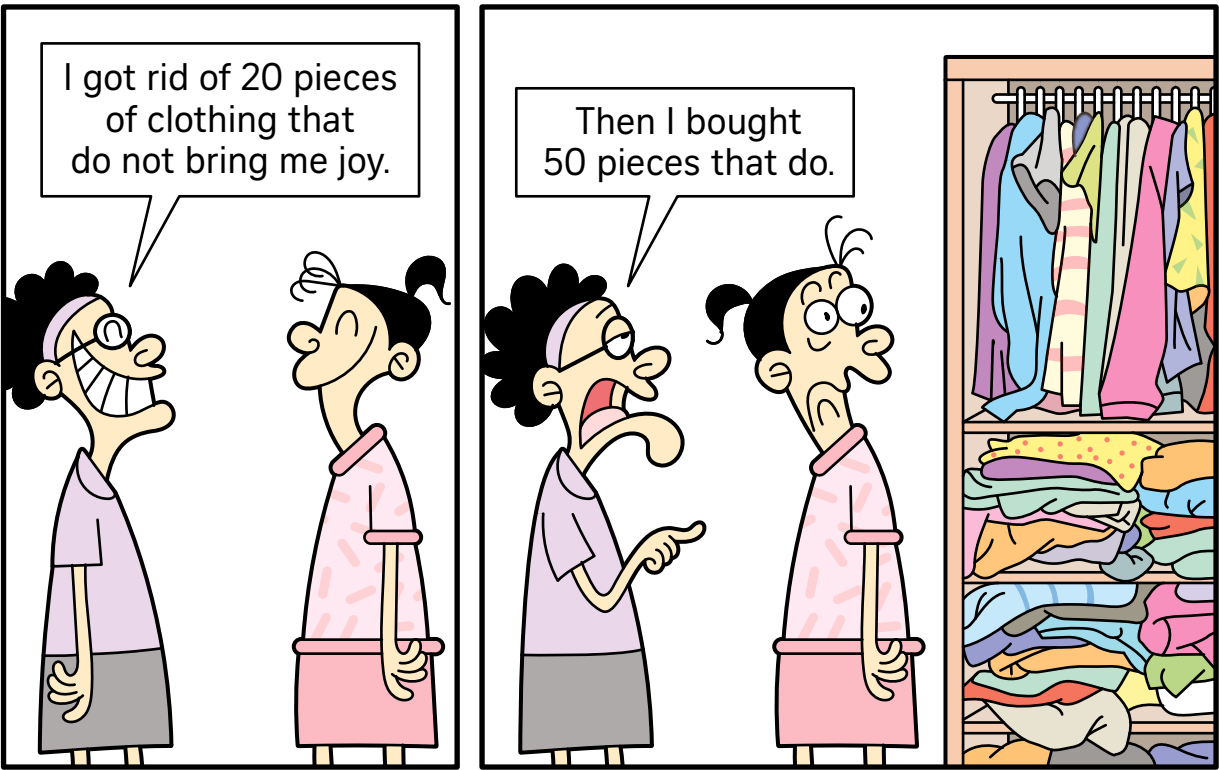
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FORUM

deedhan's TAKE

Marie Kondo show sparks decluttering fever among Singaporeans



Maids are no less human than us

The report (Does boss' son have the right to scold the maid?; Dec 20) made for interesting reading. The hurtful and heart-wrenching words that were used by the six-year-old toddler – “Aunty stupid, aunty bad, aunty die” – were probably not understood by him. Those words were clearly uttered by some adults in the house regularly enough for the child to pick up and use them. The blame for his behaviour

should fall on the mother and other adult family members in the household. Maids who work in Singapore often come from poorer countries. Most of them leave their families back home, to work here for a few hundred dollars each month so that those back in their home countries may have a better life. They don't deserve to be treated this way. My family has had a maid for the

past two decades. On the maid's birthday and on Hari Raya, we give her hongbao. She also receives hongbao from us and other relatives during Chinese New Year. For us, that is just one way of showing our appreciation to her. A maid may come from a poorer country and be less educated than us, but that does not make her any less of a human being. **Neo Poh Goon**

Wrong to compare S'pore with Netherlands, Germany

Lowering the payout eligibility age for CPF Life, currently pegged at age 65, will allow retirees to have more spare cash for their daily living needs, thereby lessening their cost-of-living burden (CPF Life payouts: Minimum age for withdrawal stays at 65; Jan 16). Manpower Minister Josephine Teo recently cited the examples of the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany to support her argument for not reducing the minimum age for withdrawal. However, these countries have

markedly different systems in place to support their elderly. For instance, in Germany, there are two types of unemployment benefits – one to support those who are temporarily out of employment and another for other workers who do not qualify for the former. These countries also have comprehensive state-supported programmes for their residents to rely on. Instead, we should look at the Singapore model of self-reliance – examine the individual's

propensity to support himself with gainful employment and see how we can help the Merdeka Generation cope with healthcare and living expenses. Many people in Singapore are feeling the pinch in terms of the rising cost of living. We should not brush aside people's request to lower the payout age. After all, they are not seeking a government handout, but merely asking for their own money to be distributed to them earlier. **Raymond Han**

Don't blame the people for CPF rumour

The people should not be blamed for starting the rumour about Central Provident Fund (CPF) payout being delayed till the age of 70 (CPF Board refutes claims that payout age raised; Jan 20). And it is true that if a person does

not do anything, then the payout will indeed start at the age of 70. If the payout is supposed to be at the age of 65, then that should be the default age, and anyone who wants a later payout should have to indicate to the CPF Board that they

want it at a later age. It is the CPF Board's actions that have caused the people to once again say that the Government is trying to hold back the money of Singaporeans. **Madam Quek Gek Soo**

Recognise S'pore's history as part of its present

A major part of Singapore's successful development lies in how it moved seamlessly from its status as a colony to an independent sovereign state, which can be attributed at least in part to accepting its colonial legacy positively, and building from its pre-existing foundations. To an outsider like me, any “colonial hangover” of the sort that journalist Tee Zhuo describes would be much welcomed

(Singapore's Bicentennial: Our colonial conundrum, Jan 13). In no way do I believe Singapore to be holding on to old ideals, and I find its ability to recognise its history as an integral part of its present both realistic and refreshing. The issues surrounding the statues of Sir Stamford Raffles are very similar to the recent concerns over the statues of Cecil Rhodes in South Africa and Oriel College, Oxford. These men lived in a

different world with different moral values, and if we focus too much on the wrong things that they did, we lose sight of the positive contributions that they made. We are now two generations removed from the colonial era. Britain has no problems looking up to its former colony as a role model, and surely Singapore likewise should have few qualms about retaining the memory of Raffles. **Richard Copus**

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# Let SMEs explain unwillingness to fund employee training

The findings from the latest National Business Survey, involving 705 local and foreign companies in Singapore, tell us nothing new (Firms not investing enough in workers, poll shows, Jan 18).

We have known for years that getting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to pay for employees' training is like getting blood out of a stone.

Once again this is the key finding

from a survey, accompanied with the same message from the sponsor of the research exhorting businesses to invest in training.

We should hear instead from the SMEs which were part of the data sample, and find out why they are unwilling to pay for staff training.

One common explanation that I have heard is staff mobility. Some employers have had employees resign shortly after investing in their education.

It can be discouraging for SMEs to be treated as "training schools", investing time and effort into imparting knowledge to employees only for them to leave.

Hearing from the horse's mouth on why SMEs are adamant on not paying for employee training can help policymakers come up with programmes to help both SMEs and their employees.

I believe that organisations should support their employees' training and development needs wherever possible.

After all, if the training is specific to the organisation, it is reasonable for employers to pay for it.

However, it is equally important for working professionals to take ownership of their own training.

If their employers do pay for their education, I hope employees take it as a bonus and not as an entitlement.

**Tan Kar Quan**

# Penalty regime for security officers overly harsh

I am dismayed by the move to impose stiffer penalties on security officers who do not perform professionally, especially those who sleep on the job (Giving security officers peace of mind, despite the penalties; Jan 18).

While it may be justifiable to penalise irresponsible officers who turn up for work drunk, since this is done intentionally, the punishments – possible jail terms and fines – are too harsh for those who doze off.

Wielding the stick will not solve the problem. Instead, the Government should examine the reasons why some officers end up dozing off at work.

These security officers often work long shifts without adequate rest, and are not paid competitive salaries.

Add to that the monotonous nature of their jobs, and it is understandable that some might unintentionally doze off.

These are systemic issues that the Government needs to address first.

What is needed is peer support to stay awake, or sufficient rest time as is the case in other industries.

There is no need to criminalise such behaviour.

Even for the more severe breaches, the Government could instead have created a centralised portal for security agencies to blacklist security officers who have been dismissed for breaches of conduct.

This would be punishment enough, since it would be near impossible for such officers to find another job in the industry.

It seems harsh to single out this one group for punitive measures by the state, giving the impression that security officers were so undisciplined that the Government had to step in to keep them in line.

I urge the Government to rethink this move and explore alternative options. Severe penalties will only deter people from this much-needed job.

**Sean Lim Wei Xin**

# Why electricity retailers' rates are better

Mr Albert Tang in his letter (Why are SP Group's rates higher than retailers'?; Jan 16) asked why electricity retailers are able to offer lower rates than the regulated tariff in the Open Electricity Market.

The regulated tariff, charged by SP Group and approved by the Energy Market Authority, reflects the long-term costs of producing and delivering electricity in Singapore, such as the costs of building and operating the power plants and maintaining the power grid.

On the other hand, the electricity rates offered by retailers typically reflect the current market conditions, level of competition and short-term costs of producing electricity.

Under current market conditions where electricity production capacity exceeds demand for electricity, we can expect market prices to be lower than the regulated tariff.

However, this may change over time based on market demand and supply.

Consumers should be aware that while the price plans offered by retailers are fixed for the duration of each contract, retailers, like all businesses, may adjust their prices and discounts over time.

Consumers who have switched to other retailers can also switch back to buying electricity at the regulated tariff from SP Group.

They should check with their retailers if there are any applicable charges when making this decision.

In the Open Electricity Market, consumers can also benefit from more choices and innovative offers, such as electricity generated from solar power, as well as value-added packages through bundled products and services.

**Dorcas Tan (Miss)**  
Director  
Market Development and Surveillance Department  
Energy Market Authority

# Don't take racial and religious tolerance for granted

At the FairPrice Finest supermarket at Bedok Mall on Saturday afternoon, I noticed a man wearing a T-shirt that read "Mr Jihad".

The T-shirt design mimicked the characters in the Mr Men series of children's books, with "Mr Jihad" having a bomb strapped to his back.

I was immediately outraged, and told him that his T-shirt was offensive and should not be worn in public since it could get him in trouble.

The man, who appeared to be and spoke like a Chinese Singaporean in his 30s, acknowledged what I said but seemed to laugh it off.

It troubles me that a Singaporean adult should be so cavalier about this sensitive issue.

The T-shirt design reinforces a terrible stereotype and perpetuates ignorance about Muslim beliefs, serving to anger a minority race along with secular moderates like me.

New York Times columnist

Charles Blow once said: "One doesn't have to operate with great malice to do great harm. The absence of empathy and understanding are sufficient."

His words ring true here, this man was not ignorant to the objectionable nature of his T-shirt, but still chose to wear it in public.

Knowing nothing of the man, I cannot say if he was a bigot or was simply out to attract attention, but such undue provocation takes a jab at the peace and harmony we enjoy

in Singapore.

I am all for creative freedom, but something like this goes too far.

Worn at the wrong place at the wrong time, the T-shirt could have sparked a fight, riot or worse.

As a Singaporean, I believe that our racial and religious tolerance should never be taken for granted, as our success as a nation is due in part to how we all get along in harmony.

I therefore feel it is my duty to speak up when I see this status quo threatened, and hope more people will do the same.

**Gurmit Singh Kullar**

# All Ascott divestments carefully considered

We refer to the letter by Mr Tan Chor Yong (Probe big difference in valuation and buyout amount; Jan 21).

We wish to clarify that the valuation of Ascott Raffles Place Singapore as at Dec 31 last year was conducted as part of Ascott Residence Trust's (Ascott Reit) annual valuation exercise for the entire portfolio of Ascott Reit.

It was commissioned by DBS Trustee, as trustee for Ascott Reit.

The valuation of Ascott Raffles Place Singapore was conducted by Colliers International, an independent valuer, using the discounted cashflow method,

which is consistently applied by Ascott Reit and generally in line with market practice.

Ascott Reit's assets are held primarily to generate stable long-term rental income, which forms its principal source of recurring cashflow.

Concerning the sale, an independent property consultant, Cushman & Wakefield, was engaged to conduct a marketing exercise for the divestment of Ascott Raffles Place Singapore.

The sale and purchase agreement for the divestment was signed on Jan 9 this year, and the sale price of \$353.3 million reflects

the highest offer received during the exercise.

As disclosed in the announcement on Jan 9, the sale was to an unrelated third party.

We wish to clarify that all divestments are carefully considered by Ascott Residence Trust Management, the manager of Ascott Reit, and the divestment of Ascott Raffles Place Singapore was approved by the board of directors in accordance with the applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

**Beh Siew Kim (Ms)**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ascott Residence Trust Management Limited

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# Telling it like it is, from the ground

THE STRAITS TIMES  
Best News Feature for journalism  
Editor & Publisher EPPY Awards 2018

ST Photo: Kua Chee Siong

THE STRAITS TIMES

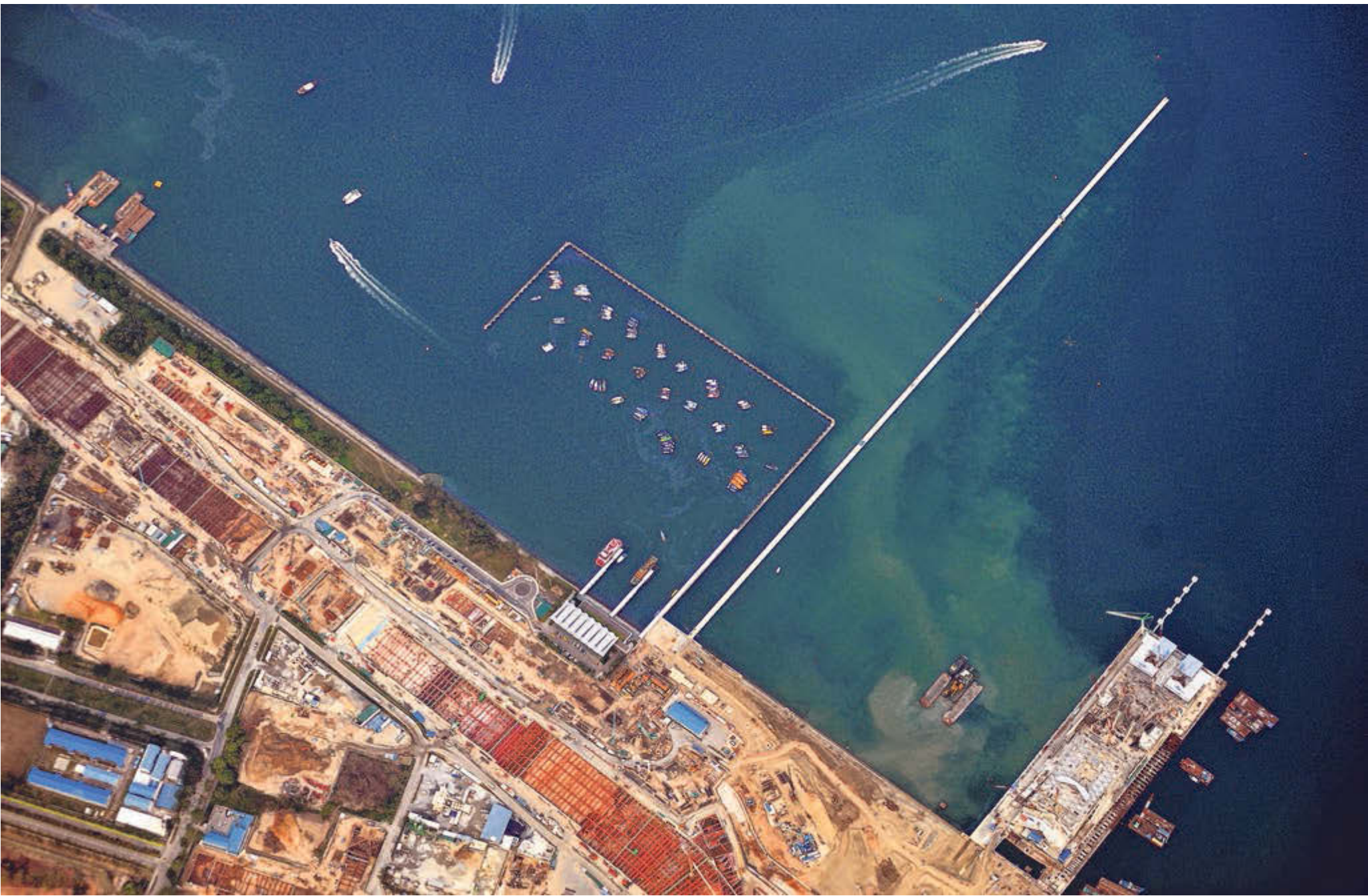
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Capturing life in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh were The Straits Times' associate editor Rahul Pathak (left), artist Pradip Kumar Sikdar (middle), and executive photojournalist Kua Chee Siong. The ST team spent nine days in the Rohingya camps in July 2018.





# PICTURE THIS



ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

## Gateway to islands

An aerial photograph of Marina South Pier taken in 2011. Today, the pier is primarily used by small boats and ferries going to the Southern Islands.

Photonico is a website offering high-quality stock photos that celebrate Asian contemporary culture and heritage. It is a platform that showcases the thousands of editorial and stock photos that our staff and contributing photographers shoot. These photos can be purchased for personal and commercial use at an affordable price.

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